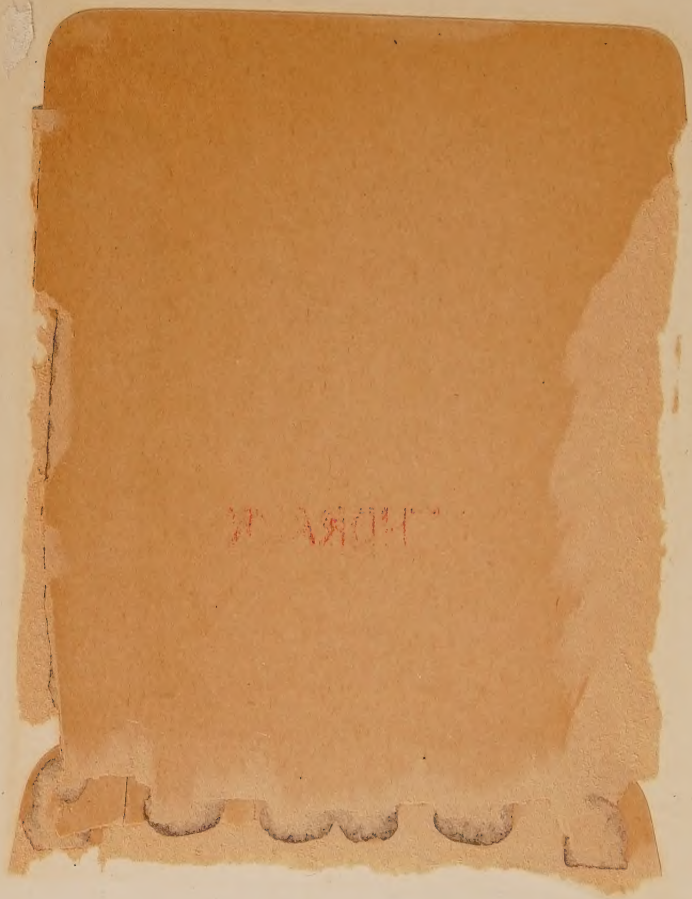
.55.
UPLAND LIBRARY
UPLAND, CALIFORNIA
WITHDRAWN



S136
DE5
REGIS COLLEGE
S. J.
LIBRARY
WITHDRAWN
DENVER, COLO.

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

A TEXT-BOOK

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

A TEXT-BOOK

BY

ROBERT I. GANNON, S. J.

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW YORK

5.6
2 Ju 25

Copyrighted, 1925, by
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINTED IN U. S. A.

UPLAND COLLEGE LIBRARY
UPLAND, CALIFORNIA
WITHDRAWN
23064
808.2
G198
T

TO

M. B. G.

AND THE CHARTER MEMBERS OF

THE FORDHAM PLAY SHOP

PREFACE

THIS little book has no intention of lecturing playwrights or even newspaper critics. It was written for college men who are as yet unfamiliar with the more intricate aspects of dramatic literature, and aims to guide them through the one-act-play to higher things — to Sophocles, Shakespeare, and the classics of our modern stage.

It is not a catalogue of iron regulations. It is simply an ordering of the elements that are found in most fine one-act-plays. We should, then, never think of saying: "Follow these instructions and produce a masterpiece," but rather: "Look at a masterpiece with care and this is what you will probably see."

The chapters are, as a rule, condensed, and where a particular subject is treated at length, the reason is not its relative importance, but the difficulty of briefer explanation. We have presumed throughout not only the living voice of a professor, but more especially his individual experience and preferences. That is our reason for not dogmatizing on questions of taste, for leaving unsolved most of the points introduced for discussion, and for asking at times questions that reach down into depths only suggested by the text. With regard to disputed definitions, it was necessary, for the sake of order and consistency, to formulate, with clear decision, those that seemed best to the author. If the class can prove them inadequate and substitute their own, so much the better.

Where the public library is convenient, there should be no trouble in obtaining plenty of plays to work on. In remote districts, if the college library

does not solve the problem, a few of the collections listed in the last appendix would be sufficient for the class, especially if, as the author presupposes, the plays are read aloud and discussed while they are still warm with life. For a small shelf, select Cohen, Lewis, Mayorga, and the Atlantic collections.

It is suggested that many of the topics introduced under the headings "For Discussion" and "Exercises," would be appropriate assignments for short essays, oral English, or library research.

Though not the primary aim of the course, exercises in the writing of plays inevitably follow a deep interest in the technique. The work outlined in Part Four is the result of actual experiment, and represents the general method followed in The Play Shop of Fordham University.

If there is anything entirely new in the book, aside from the classroom form, it has slipped in unknown to the author. Certainly, the more fundamental principles appear as the sum and substance of a hundred modern critiques, although each writer has put them down, as in the present instance, with a well-intentioned freshness. For these no acknowledgment is due. A few ideas and even phrases have been drawn from sources that cannot now be traced. Such are indicated by quotation marks without a reference. Where, on the contrary, the chapter of another book has been condensed to a sentence or to a few short rules, we have expressed our indebtedness by a reference without quotation marks. The authorities whom we have explicitly and intentionally quoted are listed on page 153. The small numbers that occur throughout the text refer to this list.

Of our contemporaries, three stimulating books have placed us under far greater obligation than all the rest. These are: "Playmaking," by William

Archer; "Dramatic Technique," by George Baker, and more than either, "The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play," by Percival Wilde. The third is so satisfactory that if it were a text-book instead of a four-hundred-page reference work, this present volume would never have appeared.

For the short-story, we have found much that was helpful in Robert W. Neal, Berg Essenwein, Brander Matthews, and Henry W. Phillips, but especially in Walter Pitkin's altogether delightful books, "Short-Story Writing" and "How to Write Stories."

Finally, to inject a personal note, we have labored in an atmosphere of such kindly criticism, that these acknowledgments would be incomplete without an expression of gratitude for the constant assistance given us in Fordham University, Woodstock College and St. Andrew-on-Hudson. We are indebted most of all to Mr. John A. Waldron, S. J., Professor of English in Holy Cross College, who collaborated in the matter of questions and exercises, and to Rev. Francis P. Le Buffe, S. J., of the Fordham University School of Social Service, who, in the midst of many labors, found time to see these pages through the press.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: Dramatic Technique PAGE

Technique — Drama — Theatrical — Three Kinds of Technique 3-11

PART ONE: The Nature of the One-Act-Play . . .13-58

Chap. I: Dramatic and Climactic Narrative

Narrative — Dramatic — Climactic — Plot — Its Growth — Its Qualities — Unity — Of Action — Of Subject — Of Theme — Of Persons — Truth — Fundamental Thought — Incidental Thought — Appearance of Truth — Probability — Consistency — Reasonableness — Naturalness — Planting — Chance — Coincidence — Proportion 17

Chap. II: Singleness of Effect

Definition — Crucial Moments — Unity of Impression 29

Chap. III: Continuity

Definition — An Act — The Unities of Time and Place 35

Chap. IV: Presentation on the Stage

Action — Its Definition — Its Importance — Its Popularity — Its Varieties — Characterization — Its Relation to Action — Interest — Properties of Characterization — Probability — Consistency — Life — Proportion — Means of Characterization — Costume and Make-up — Facial Expression and Gesture — Stage Business — Exits and Entrances — Dialogue — Its Form — Its Aim — Its Varieties 38

PAGE

PART TWO: The Construction of the One-Act-Play 59-104

Chap. V: The Beginning of the One-Act-Play

Where It Should Begin — How — Three Types of Opening — What the Beginning Should Accomplish — Definite Impression — Atmosphere — Exposition — Fingerposts — Answering the Questions, Who? Where? When? 63

Chap. VI: The Middle of the One-Act-Play

Two Parts — Complication — Resolution — Law of Logic — Link Scene — Cover Scene — Law of Progression — Law of Continuity — Four Points — Incentive Moment — Peripeteia — Crisis — Climax — Tension — Suspense — Held Situation — Diagrams 79

Chap. VII: The End of the One-Act-Play

Where the Play Should End — Direct Crisis — Indirect Crisis 98

PART THREE: The Analysis of a One-Act-Play . 105-124

PART FOUR: Writing the One-Act-Play . . . 125-141

Gathering Materials — Exercises in Characterization — In Dialogue — Dramatizing Short-Stories — Plot Work — Finding a Theme — Plot Stimulators — Exercises in Using Formulae — Special Scenes for Interest 127

APPENDICES 143-154

1. Accidental Technique 145
2. An Outline History of the One-Act-Play 146
3. Classification of One-Act-Plays 148
4. List of Plays Recommended for Study 150
5. Books and Authors Quoted in the Text 153

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

A TEXT-BOOK

INTRODUCTION

DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

THE fact that the terms "dramatic" and "theatrical" are so frequently identified in the thought and speech of every-day life, would be in itself an excellent reason for drawing a line of distinction between them. But this line of distinction has taken on width and attained the dignity of a long introduction, because upon it rests the definition of Dramatic Technique, and hence, after a fashion, the plan of the whole book.

Assuming for the moment, what we shall later endeavor to prove, that most of the world's drama is enacted on the dark side of the footlights, that it envelopes each one of us many times in our lives, it is obvious that writing a play consists of nothing but taking bits of that drama and making them fit for the theatre. Dramatic technique, then, may be defined as the method employed in making drama theatrical.

Drama.

Etymology and History

In using the word "drama" thus, we go beyond mere etymology, which tells us only that the original term, derived from the Greek verb δράομαι, meant an action. We go, too, beyond history and tradition as outlined, for instance, by R. G. Moulton.[1] He conceives all poetry, whether epic, lyric or dramatic, as evolving from a "primitive ballad dance," which, in the earliest times, combined the elements of all three species. The story element,

secondary in the lyric, is of prime importance in the epic and the drama, with this difference: in the epic it is presented by a narrator, while in the drama it presents itself. On this basis he formulates the following definition: "Drama is creative literature whose story presents itself instead of being told from outside."

Seeking the Essence

As this definition, however, excludes much that we consider real drama and includes much that we refuse so to consider, we begin to grope inductively for a definition that is formal; that seems to give us the only elements common to all drama and proper to drama alone. The first step in such a process is to ask ourselves, "What does the word mean as it is used every day by educated men?" We shall find light in the accumulated answers to the following questions:

Is every situation on the stage said to be dramatic because it presents itself? Do we sometimes say that the first act was well written, but hardly dramatic? Or again, that the Summer is not the time for drama, but rather for something less serious? The inference in the second case seems to be that in hot weather we do not care to think. But what is it in a drama that makes us think?

Are many situations, on the other hand, said to be dramatic which are not on the stage at all, but in life, or in novels and poems? Is it merely in a transferred sense that we call these situations dramatic? Do we mean merely that they would be effective on the stage? Perhaps we do. But why would they be effective on the stage? Is it because they are serious, emotional, touched with character, unexpected, timely? All these elements are very effective in drama: so, too, are crisis, climax and suspense, but is their very presence enough to constitute drama?

The Rejected Elements

Suppose, for example, we saw a ragged man of whom we knew nothing, dart out suddenly from behind a wagon and disappear under the wheels of a street-car. The scene would be serious, emotional, tinged with character, unexpected and perfectly timed. Should we call it dramatic? Suppose, furthermore, a vague suspicion were to cross our mind that the victim might be our own eccentric uncle. The car is stopped and in a state of great suspense, we wait until we are assured that he is a perfect stranger. Neither the suspense nor the crisis — that is, the answer to the leading question of the situation, "Is he my uncle?" — have made the incident drama. In much the same way climax, also, might be excluded. If, for instance, the car had struck a milk-wagon at Thirty-first street, a Scotch collie at Thirty-second, and at Thirty-third the unhappy man in rags, there would be climax certainly, but no more drama than before.

The Essential Element

So it is that, while not caring to appear too final with regard to a mooted question, we reject, as unessential to drama, every element but one. We believe that the struggle of a human will against an obstacle is always dramatic and that without it there is no drama. That is why all situations on the stage are not dramatic. That is why certain situations met in life would be effective on the stage. Struggle it is that makes us think in a drama, and the more intense or subtle is the struggle, by so much is the drama more thought-provoking. In fact, it seems that every other element we mentioned is dramatic only when associated with this all-essential note of conflict.

This would explain, too, the enduring popularity of the theatre, for this love of drama, love of struggle, is rooted in our nature. "Life is a warfare." Our sports are mimic wars. Even

wordy battles have always been popular. The Greeks loved their stichomythia; the Mediævals their estrif and flyting. For instances of the former, take any play of classic Greece; of the latter, read over the quarrel scene in "Noah's Ark" of the Chester Cycle. The Elizabethans relished the conflict between Brutus and Cassius, Benedick and Beatrice; while the Georgians took equal pleasure in Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, Tony Lumpkin and Constance Neville. In a later day, when William Gillette was dramatizing Sherlock Holmes, he made Moriarty, who was unimportant in the book, a principal, merely that the element of struggle might be emphasized.

The struggle may be with nature, with fate, with man, or with one's self. Sometimes we find one, sometimes all. In "Ile," for instance, the main struggle takes place chiefly in the soul of the protagonist, and is waged between his predominant passion, pride, and a deep love for his wife. The main struggle is externalized by the struggle between Annie and the Captain. The main struggle is motivated by the incidental struggles between (I) the Mate and the Captain, and (II) the Crew and the Captain. While throughout the play all of them are struggling unconsciously with the frozen North.

The Formal Definition

In formulating a definition, however, we wish to emphasize the fact that the obstacle may be slight and, as in most comedies, the struggle almost imperceptible. Hence, for the words "struggle" and "obstacle," we substitute the more generic "reaction" and "difficulty," so that our formal definition now reads: Drama is the reaction of a man in difficulty.

By way of confirmation, we may consider a number of situations drawn from daily experience, such as those collected by Dr. Kate Gordon and quoted in "Plots and Personalities" by Slosson and Downey. In each case we are to decide, relying merely on our own popular conception of drama, "Is this the germ

of a good play?" It will be found that those chosen as the germ of a good play will contain this reaction element, those rejected do not.

Modern Opinion

The definition given above is, in substance, that of many eminent critics. Freytag writes, "What the drama presents is always a struggle which, with strong perturbation of soul, the hero wages against opposing forces. The essential nature of the drama is conflict and suspense."[2] Brunetière: "Drama is essentially a struggle."[3] Henry Arthur Jones: "No adequate obstacle, no drama."[4] George Bernard Shaw: "Drama is the resistance of fact and law to human feelings."[5] And even William Archer, who denies our definition, admits at least that "Conflict is always dramatic."[6]

For Discussion:

1. There is no struggle in "Agamemnon;" in "Oedipus," unless this writhing worm on a hook can be said to struggle; in "As You Like It," apart from the trivial scene of the wrestling match; in "Othello." Still all these are great dramas.[6]
2. There is no struggle in the balcony scene of "Romeo and Juliet;" in the banquet scene in "Macbeth;" in the death scene of "Cleopatra;" in the screen scene of the "School for Scandal." Yet all are said to be dramatic.[6]
3. The essence of drama is crisis.[6]
4. The novel and the drama are exactly opposite, one to the other.[3]
5. Drama is one species of fiction.[4]
6. Drama is a poem accommodated to action.
7. The drama is the conclusion, the most interesting moment in every novel.[7]

8. A novel is a conviction of our fellow man's existence strong enough to take upon itself a form of imagined life clearer than reality.[33]
9. The novel from which one cannot make a good play is not for that reason bad; but there is no good play from which a novel cannot be made. It is merely a matter of technical rules that differentiates the novel from the play.[8]
10. The novel is a leisurely stroll for stroll's sake. Drama is a trip in the train when the destination is all that matters.

EXERCISE ON THE DRAMATIC ELEMENT:

Answer the following questions with regard to a play read in class:

1. What desire causes the conflict?
2. What opposes, what favors the desire?
3. Are there forces in the struggle other than human?
4. Are these forces working in one of those "ultimate passionate cruces of life where duty and inclination come nobly to grapple," or do we find them working in some relatively minor crises of life?

THEATRICAL.

The Purpose of the Audience

What now is this "theatre" for which the playwright must adapt his drama, and what do we mean by the word "theatrical"? Etymologically, a theatre is a place where things can be seen (θέατρον, being derived from θεάομαι, I look on), but we know that what most people see in a theatre is merely a means to an end. Their ultimate object in going at all is to give their

emotions a little necessary exercise. For rare is the soul which can, in a month, call all its noble passions into play, and unused passions, like muscles, become atrophied in time. One man's life is drab, another's hectic; one has nothing but sunshine, another nothing but tears. So each goes to the theatre as to a gymnasium, to supply, indirectly, what his regular life denies him.

So far the object in view is very like that which a booklover has when he fondles a fine piece of literature. The specific difference lies in the manner of taking the exercises. At the theatre, the audience is a strange, multiple soul unified by the vague influences of mob-psychology. It sits there in the darkened house, thinking one thought, suffering one passion, absorbed in the most absorbing of all mere human studies — the open souls of men and women in conflict.

The Formal Definition

If this, then, be the theatre, we have a definition of theatrical. "Theatrical is that which creates emotional response when presented on the stage."

The word response, which presupposes an audience, emphasizes the truth of Sarcey's remark, "In a play, the audience is the first fact. All principles are derived from this."[9] It might be profitable, from time to time, to test the truth of this observation.

A Play.

Having thus clarified our concepts of "dramatic" and "theatrical," we recall our definition of Dramatic Technique: "The method employed in making drama theatrical." Such theatrical drama we call a play, giving as our full definition of the term:

"A play is the reaction of a man in difficulty which creates emotional response, when presented on the

stage." Expressed in more convenient form, "a play is a dramatic and climactic narrative suitable for production on the stage."*

For Discussion:

1. There is no other rule of the theatre than that of pleasing the public.[10]
2. Whether you write or act, think no more of the audience than if it never existed. Imagine a huge wall across the front of the stage, separating you from the audience and behave exactly as though the curtain had never risen.[8]
3. The screen scene in "The School for Scandal" would have been improved, had the audience been ignorant of Lady Teazle's presence.
4. A play is a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humors and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.[11]
5. A play is an action represented by men who act on the stage in order to hold five hundred spectators between four walls for three hours, without their desiring to leave.[9]
6. A play is any representation of imaginary personages which is capable of interesting an average audience assembled in the theatre.[6]
7. A play is an orderly representation of life arousing emotion in an audience.
8. A play is significant human action in pattern for stage presentation.[12]

*Drama expressed in dialogue form, yet obviously unsuited for the theatre, as distinguished from a play, is called "Closet Drama." For example: Milton's "Samson Agonistes."

9. Emotional response is not required for a play. Aristotle put down πάθη as one of the materials of drama. It is enough that we have esthetic pleasure.

DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE IS OF THREE KINDS:

1. Essential: that technique which is unchanging and universal.
2. Accidental: that technique which changes with the changing ideals and tastes of different peoples and different generations. (Cf. Appendix 1.)
3. Special: that technique which is peculiar to individual species of drama, *e. g.*, pageant, opera, one-act-play.

PART ONE

THE NATURE OF THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

PART ONE

The Nature of the One-Act-Play

To study the nature of the one-act-play is to examine in detail the following definition:

> A ONE-ACT-PLAY IS A DRAMATIC AND CLIMACTIC NARRATIVE WITH A SINGLE EFFECT, SUITABLE FOR CONTINUOUS PRODUCTION ON THE STAGE.

The process of arriving at such a definition is purely experimental. After reading a large number of short plays, we find that many of them are moulded in the same artistic form. They constitute a species. So we note their specific differences, combine them with the generic notes of a play and then apply our new-found definition to representative specimens of the type until we are satisfied that it is complete and exclusive.

The Hyphens in the One-Act-Play

We notice at once that some of the best collections of one-act plays include pieces to which this definition does not apply. Such, for example, are mere character sketches and playlets. The latter, making no effort at singleness of impression, differ in no essential from any other kind of play, except that they are continuous. There are, then, plays in one act that are one-act plays, but are not one-act-plays. For this name, spelt as it is with two hyphens, is a proper name given arbitrarily to that one species of short drama which is the short-story's closest kin.

The Short-Story and the One-Act-Play

This relationship appears even in the words of the definition, for "A dramatic and climactic narrative with a single effect" defines a short-story. The one-act-play and the short-story have, then, the following elements

in common: story, characterization, dialogue and single effect. These elements, however, undergo very real changes, owing to the fact that the one-act-play suppresses the writer's personality, gains its effects through the co-operation of other human beings and is meant for appeal to a large gathering of people.

CHAPTER I

A Dramatic and Climactic Narrative

Definition of the Terms

A narrative is a story or a detailed relation of connected events. A dramatic narrative is a story of human reaction to difficulty. A climactic narrative is a story in which the events are so ordered that those of highest emotional value are most effectively placed.

This does not mean, necessarily, a constantly ascending grade of emotion. By way of explanation, let us suppose that 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, represent five situations, where 5 is five times as emotional as 1. The order might be just as truly climactic if we had 3, 1, 4, 5, 2, provided that in the individual case, 5 were more effective before 2 than in any other place.

The Growth of a Plot

A dramatic and climactic narrative in outline is called a *plot.* A plot, though a kind of pattern, etymologically it is a "weaving," is not arbitrarily imposed upon the matter of the story like a sonnet structure upon the verses of a poetaster. The structure grows organically from the themes and the characters. As Galsworthy says: "A good plot is that sure edifice that rises out of the interplay of circumstances on character and character on circumstances within the enclosing atmosphere of an idea."[13] Moulton puts it very well when he calls plot "the application of design to human life," and likens the dramatist's use of life, incident and character to the work of the scientist "tracing rhythmic movements in the beautiful confusion of the heavenly bodies."[1] The

dramatist receives the shapeless facts of reality and returns them in an ordered economy of design.

Qualities of a Plot

The most elementary canons of art, applicable to a schoolboy's paragraph or a Gothic Cathedral, demand that a plot, as part of a literary production, possess the three familiar qualities, Unity, Truth and Proportion. The reasons are evident. Incoherence betrays a defective intellect; a lie, in art as in life, is a deformity and so a sin, at least against beauty; while lack of proportion denotes absence of that sense of eternal fitness which we call "good taste." Furthermore, in the theatre we demand not only objective excellence, but effectiveness as well. In other words, a play is good or bad in so far as it achieves the desired effect upon the audience, or fails to do so. As will later appear, absence of Unity, Truth and Proportion will, besides marring the literary value, spoil the theatrical effect as well.

THE FIRST QUALITY OF THE PLOT IS UNITY.

"Unity is the inspiration of the one-act-play; unity is its aim, unity is its soul; unity is at once its mainspring and its escapement, its motive power and its limitation."[14] This Unity or Oneness, most generically defined as "an absence of division," takes on many shades of meaning in connection with the various aspects of a play, but may be conveniently considered under two principal heads: Unity of Action and Unity of Impression.

Unity of Action

Unity of action is attained when, in the words of Aristotle, "The action is complete and whole and of a certain magnitude."[15] By complete is meant that "that specific action which began the fable must also continue throughout and be brought to its conclusion at the end of the play."[15] A whole is "that which possesses a beginning, a middle and an

end."[15] We may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits that the sequence of events, according to the laws of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good or from good fortune to bad.

Aristotle did not intend to set down iron laws for all times and forbid the invention of new dramatic forms. He studied the Greek masters and said: "If you would attain the same effect, use the same means. Here they are." So that if some of the new forms do succeed in producing something great, they are not to be banned as outlaw, nor can Aristotle fall into disrepute. As a matter of fact, however, great one-act-plays, since they are concentrated on one episode, can hardly fail to have one specific and continuous action; since they are idealized crises, and any crisis in life has, after a fashion, a beginning, a middle and an end, they can hardly fail to be whole; finally, being concerned with crises they are concerned with change from at least comparative good to at least comparative evil, or vice versa, and cannot fail to possess a certain magnitude.

From this unity of action three subordinate unities may be derived:

1. Unity of Subject: The subject answers the question—"What is the play about?" War, Love, Revenge and the like. For example, the subject of "Allison's Lad" is heredity.

2. Unity of Theme: The theme answers the question—"What does the play mean?" For example, the theme of "Allison's Lad" is, that noble blood will assert itself. The theme is somewhat like the proposition of a speech, except that it is proved by illustration only, *i. e.*, by a story without any arguments. Syllogisms have no place in the one-act-play. The theme may be a platitude or a mere impression, but in any case it can be stated in a declarative sentence. It may stand out glaringly as in

"Spreading the News" or it may be so hidden in the illustration, the story, that it quite escapes notice as in "A Night at An Inn." In any case, let there be but one principal theme.

3. UNITY OF PERSONS: The plot must concern itself with the same persons from the first to the last. How many of these there should be in a one-act-play depends on the material. Certainly, fewness of characters makes for clarity. The playwright is fortunate if he can center attention on one. In plays like "Joint Owners in Spain," "The Workhouse Ward," and "Overtones," two share the limelight almost equally. In plays containing many characters we seldom find more than two fully and sharply etched. (Cf. Characterization.)

Unity of Impression

Unity of Impression will be considered under "Singleness of Effect." Five minor unities contribute to the unity of impression, namely, unity of type, mood, manner, time and place. The first three will also be considered under "Singleness of Effect," the last two under "Continuity."

THE SECOND QUALITY OF THE PLOT IS TRUTH.

In a one-act-play, as in any other sort of literature, we recognize two kinds of thought: Fundamental and Incidental.

1. FUNDAMENTAL THOUGHT is the meaning which underlies the whole plot. Such a thought must be at least subjectively true, *i. e.,* it cannot be professedly false. This is another way of saying that a fine art must possess sincerity. True, the artist may be mistaken, but the point is that he does not suspect it and

hence can burn with as much noble passion for his theme as though he were right. If, for example, he believes in his heart that every ugly old woman in town rides brooms and casts spells on the neighbor's children, he may write a play that glorifies even the witch-burners of Salem and still remain within the bounds of literature and fundamental truth.

Can a play, then, whose fundamental thought glorifies something intrinsically immoral, like murder or blasphemy, be literature if the author believes what he writes? It would be if a sane author could believe such a thought. But we know from reason, that owing to the existence of the Natural Law, there are some things no healthy-minded man can sincerely believe, no matter how hard he tries to deceive himself. The product of a diseased mind, on the other hand, partakes of the source's deformity and cannot be considered as belonging to a fine art.

2. Incidental thoughts are all the various things said and done in the course of the play. These thoughts should aim not at "the truth," but at "the appearance of truth." They should be probable according to the standards of the play itself.[12]

Appearance of Truth

A play, if it is to take its place with the products of any fine art, cannot be a photographic picture of life. Some kind of idealization is necessary. Hence, in quoting Hamlet's famous line about the theatre holding "as 'twere the mirror up to nature," the words "as 'twere" should be italicized. For perfectly to mirror life would be not only useless, but impossible. Useless, because "the world is here, it would be absurd to repeat it;" impossible because, to choose the most practical reason, life is so badly arranged. "Logical, purposeful, emotive in its entirety, sections small enough to come within the compass of the stage may be devoid of these essential requirements."[12]

Moreover, the theatre is, of its nature, a realm of appearances where green gauze veils can look more

like the sea than could tanks of the purest water; where a compact, sparkling, dramatic and quite impossible conversation between two persons seated on a canvas log under the warm rays of an amber spot can seem more real than anything overheard on a train. That is why Shaw called a play "a sane hallucination" and Sarcey insisted that it was nothing more than "an aggregate of conventions designed to produce on the spectators an illusion . . . to show life in a certain aspect to twelve hundred assembled in a theatre and to produce on the multiple soul of this audience a certain impression."[9] The same impression, let us add, that it would have received had it watched the story develop for years and known intimately all the characters.

To produce this impression, we must "give the events of life emphasis, proportion and perspective."[16] Wordsworth said that the simple recital of the facts of a given phenomenon might be at once formally accurate and essentially untrue, because it had been made either mechanically or ignorantly, by noting the unessential and the significant without discriminating between them. The drama should then paint "the truth of human life, not facts."[16] The truth here is the eternal element of a situation, *e. g.*, mothers love their children. This is always morally certain. But the facts are the particular situations found in life, which, though actual, may seem unreal and hence may be dramatically untrue, *e. g.*, a mother starves her baby to feed a stray cat. This was what Amiel had in mind when he wrote in his "Journal": "The ideal is, after all, truer than the real, for the ideal is the eternal element in perishable things, it is their formula in the book of their creator, and, therefore, at once the most exact and the most condensed expression of them." From this it would appear that

truth is not only stranger than fiction, but that fiction is often truer than fact. Hence, Aristotle's remark that "the probable impossible is better than the improbable possible," and the quotation he gives from "Agathon": "It is probable that many things should happen contrary to probability."

So, then, when we speak of a situation being probable in the dramatic sense, we mean that an audience, subject to all the influences of the theatre, will accept it without internal protest. When such protest arises it is because the action has been inconsistent, unreasonable or unnatural. Hence, to be probable, or true, the plot must be consistent, reasonable and natural.

1. To be True, a Plot Must be Consistent, *i. e.*, one part must not contradict another. A playwright may begin by asking us to concede that two plus two is equal to five, but he must afterwards adhere logically to the inference that four plus four is equal to ten and eight plus eight is equal to twenty. This was referred to, when, in speaking of incidental truths, we used the words, "according to the standards of the play itself." We should not use the same yard-stick on a children's fairy play and on a comedy of manners. What would win applause in Sophocles, might be jeered at in Clyde Fitch, and many things, profoundly moving in Paul Claudel, would be absurd in Owen Davis.

2. To be True, a Plot Must be Reasonable, *i. e.*, motivated. Each step must be linked by causality with what has gone before. As in the drama of yesterday the heroine only too often "died of the fifth act," so in a one-act-play the near approach of the curtain is sometimes the only good reason for the startling events that transpire. Especially important is the motivation when there is a change of will at a

crucial point. Evidence of such a change should be external. As an example of good motivation for such a change of will, see the constable in "The Rising of the Moon."

Adequate Motivation

Motivation is effected by having any act or result spring from a clearly preconceivable and adequate cause in the nature of the person or situation. This preparing for future events, by laying down preconceivable and adequate causes, is called "planting."

A preconceivable cause is one that satisfies analysis after the effect has taken place. It does not, like a preconceived cause, destroy the surprise element. On the contrary, owing to the many possible effects of every situation, the characters may act in a wholly unforeseen manner and yet most reasonably. For instance, a Prince is cheated out of his inheritance by an adventurer. Who can say what the outcome will be? He may triumph over his enemy in approved movie fashion, or if the play be written for an art theatre, likely as not, the poor Prince may go to the wars, the dogs, or the devil. In any case, the audience on the way home should say to itself: "I see now why he did what he did."

An adequate cause is one that is essentially as great as the effect. Where the cause is inadequate, some part of the effect has no cause at all. For instance: A normal man could not murder a normal woman because she appeared in a gown of peacock blue. Preference for a particular color is in itself a trifle and can, of itself, result only in a trifling aversion. All the other passions associated with murder are, in the present example, without any cause whatever. To make the cause adequate we must add important factors. If the man, filled with nameless fears and superstitions picked up in the depths of the Ural Moun-

tains, were driven into a frenzy at the sight of peacock blue, he might slay a normal woman. Or if the woman were a kind of fiend and intended that color as a signal that would blot out most brutally everything that we had come to love in the play, she might be slain by a normal man.

In the nature of the person or situation. These important words are meant to exclude the use of stray bullets and lightning bolts as means for clearing the stage of undesirable characters. If a selfish man is to die, we want him to die through his selfishness. If a brave man is to triumph, we want him to triumph not through an earthquake, but through his bravery. If the heroine goes to certain death nursing the victims of a horrible plague, we will not permit her to be eaten by a panther. We demand that if she must die, she die of the plague. For chance is never to usurp the place of volition or character.

Chance may, it is true, figure in the complication, but never in the solution. "The Deus ex Machina should be employed only for events external to the drama." [15] It becomes more improbable in direct ratio to its importance. In the solution chance does not show what kind of a man the hero may be. His action is not dramatic or characteristic.

A Coincidence is even more to be avoided, since it is the accidental convergence of two or more events that have themselves happened by chance. For example: At the conclusion of a certain action the hero is compelled, by the exigencies of the plot, to enter a submarine, after seeing the heroine securely bound to the wing of a hydroplane. By chance, the plane is forced to land on the deck of an ocean liner. By another chance, our hero's submarine blows up the self-same liner and said hero, for protesting, is pushed off the submarine. Just as he is sinking, however, for the third and last time, by a most refreshing coincidence, there lands beside him in the water, still securely bound to an ample piece of the hydroplane, none other than our persecuted heroine.

Although the quoted example was taken from an incredibly bad story, the fact remains that, even when handled with charm, a coincidence or "a double-barrelled chance" is almost never true in the dramatic sense.

Planting in "Ile"

For specimens of skilful preparation or planting read "Dawn," "The Golden Doom," "Spreading the News," "Allison's Lad," and especially "Ile." The last named we can study here and now with profit. In this particular play the planting is more than ordinarily important, because the crucial moment verges on the incredible. We are asked to believe that the very instant when a man who loves his wife has promised to start homewards, the ice breaks to the north. Thereupon, he changes his mind and, in consequence, his wife becomes immediately insane. Thus baldly stated, we are inclined to doubt the dramatic truth of the situation. In the first place, the motives seem to lack proportion. Would a faithful husband weigh a few barrels of oil with his wife's threatened insanity? And would a normal woman go suddenly insane because she had to spend another month in the North? In the second place, we resent the long arm of coincidence. Why should the ice break just at the right moment?

By perfect mastery of his technique, O'Neill has made the crisis and the climax seem not only possible and true, but inevitable. To achieve this result, it was necessary, from the rise of the curtain, to prepare for the crucial moment. Special emphasis had to be placed, 1st on Keeney's pride and hardness, to a less extent on his love for Annie; 2d on the nervous strain under which Mrs. Keeney is laboring, due to her gentle womanliness and the cold, silence and brutality of her surroundings; 3d on the imminence of the ice-break. Before the exposition is complete, these points have been emphasized as follows: 1st Keeney's pride,

8 times; his hardness, 13 times; his love for Annie, 4 times. 2d Mrs. Keeney's nervous strain, 7 times; her gentle womanliness, 7 times; the cold, 10 times; the silence and monotony, 5 times; the brutality, 10 times. 3d the imminence of the ice-break, 5 times. In fact, it can be said, with truth, that every line in the play bears, directly or indirectly, on one of these three points.

Like everything else in art, however, this planting can be overdone. The preparation can be so complete that preconceivable causes become preconceived and the play closes with a stifled yawn. This is really the trouble in "Followers" by Harold Brighouse. To overcome such a handicap the author of this modest and gentle comedy would need a genius for characterization, which he does not possess. The same is true of "The Romancers" by Rostand.* What should be a thrilling climax is flat and stale because of too much planting.

3. To be True, a Plot Must be Natural, *i. e.*, nothing should be used that seems abnormal, whether it deal with spiritual or material, mental, physical or moral phenomena. For instance, a play built up around a seven-year-old prodigy or a saint in ecstasy, though historically accurate, would be abnormal and hence dramatically untrue. This does not, however, exclude uncommon situations. The proposal scene in "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals" is an uncommon situation, but not unnatural.

Although until now our principal concern has been truth of plot, truth must be considered in every element of the play. "Truth of theme makes a play valid. Truth of character makes a play persuasive.

*Act I is a complete one-act-play. We may justly infer from this that there is something wrong with the structure of the play as a whole.

Truth of situation makes a play entertaining. Truth of atmosphere, mood, point of view makes a play real."[12]

The Third Quality of the Plot is Proportion.

Proportion, in general, is equivalent to good taste. With regard to the plot, it is a matter of correct emphasis. Many situations are to be arranged in a design that will most effectively set off the main crisis. To accomplish this end, one situation will be lightly touched upon, another lingered over; one will have its little moment and be forgotten, another will recur again and again; one will be given all the mechanical effects that the theatre can draw upon, another might as well be played on the back porch at ten in the morning.

This is a very far-reaching principle affecting not only the arrangement of incidents, but the relative importance of theme, action, character and atmosphere. In fact, it must be considered in almost every point hereafter discussed.

To test the general proportion of a play, we should place clearly before us its main thought and dominant emotion. Everything in the plot, characterization, atmosphere and style must be compared with that thought and emotion, and used only so far as it will make the thought more clear and the emotion more effective.

CHAPTER II

Singleness of Effect

Singleness of effect is the vivid playing upon one emotion or idea so as to create in the audience one definite impression.

A Definite impression is created when the audience is affected in a distinct and single manner, because they have beheld some one situation to laugh at, cry over, think over. This some one situation is found in the crucial moment. This moment is the soul of the one-act-play; the reason for its being written. It is one specific and significant dramatic situation near the end of the play; "the focus, the cap-stone, the central dynamic theme illustrative and illuminative of all before and after."

This moment may be the last straw that is breaking the camel's back, as in "The Clod." Here, Mary, a poor, brutish, old farm drudge, such as we may find among the "white trash" of the South, has been worried and harassed and frightened by the soldiers until —

. . . (almost ready to drop, she drags herself to the window near the back and leans against it, watching the Southerners like a hunted animal. The Sergeant and Dick go on devouring the food. The former pours the coffee, puts his cup to his lips and takes one swallow; then, jumping to his feet and upsetting his chair as he does so, he hurls his cup to the floor.)

Sergeant: Have you tried to poison us, you damn hag?

(Mary screams, and the faces of the men turn white. It is the cry of an animal goaded beyond endurance.)

MARY: *(screeching)* Break my cup? Call my coffee poison? Call me a hag, will yuh? I'll learn yuh! I'm a woman, but yer drivin' me crazy!

(She has snatched the gun from the wall and pointed it at the Sergeant. She fires. The Sergeant falls to the floor, Mary keeps on screeching. Dick rushes for his gun.)

THADDEUS: Mary! Mary!

MARY: *(aiming at Dick and firing)* I ain't a hag! I'm a woman, but yer killin' me! . . .

In "The Workhouse Ward" a striking revelation of character gives us our crucial moment.

Mike McInerney has been fighting for years with the old man who lies in the next bed. To-day the chance has been offered to him of making his home with Honor Donahoe, his sister. As he is about to leave the workhouse, his ancient enemy asks to be taken along and the following scene ensues:

MIKE MCINERNEY: . . . Bring him out with myself now, Honor Donahoe and God bless you!

MRS. DONAHOE: Well, then, I will not bring him out, and I will not bring yourself out, and you not to learn better sense. Are you making yourself ready to come?

MIKE MCINERNEY: I am thinking maybe . . . it is a mean thing for a man that is shivering into seventy years to go changing from place to place.

MRS. DONAHOE: Well take your luck or leave it. . . .

MIKE MCINERNEY: Bring the both of us with you or I'll not stir out of this.

MRS. DONAHOE: Give me back my fine suit so, till I go look for a man of my own.

MIKE MCINERNEY: Let you go so, as you are so unnatural and disobliging and look for some man of your own, God help him! For I will not go with you at all! . . .

A climax of passions, rage, shame, and finally love that ends in a muffled sob marks the moment in O'Neill's powerful little play, "In The Zone."

The scene is laid on board a ship filled with munitions during the Great War. Smitty, suspected of being a German spy, has been bound and gagged by his companions and now lies on the floor where he can watch them examining his poor little personal effects. A rubber bag, which they had thought an infernal machine, is found to be full of letters written by a cultured girl whose heart had been broken because of Smitty's weakness.

DRISCOLL: *(reads slowly, his voice becoming lower and lower as he goes on)* ". . . and if it is any satisfaction to you, I lave you the real-i-zation that you have wrecked my loife as you have wrecked your own. My one remainin' hope is that niver in God's worrld will I iver see your face again. Goodby. Edith."

(As he finishes there is deep silence, broken only by Smitty's muffled sobbing. The men cannot look at each other. Driscoll holds the rubber bag limply in his hand and some small white object falls out of it and drops noiselessly to the floor. Mechanically, Driscoll leans over and picks it up, and looks at it wonderingly.)

DAVIS: *(in a dull voice)* What's that?

DRISCOLL: *(slowly)* A bit of dried-up flower . . . a rose maybe.

In "The Glittering Gate," dramatic recognition is the chief ingredient of the effect.

Two lost souls have reached the next world. One is eternally punished by the constant disappointment of opening empty bottles. The other, Bill, sees a huge gate which he imagines is the gate of Heaven. With a tremendous effort, he manages to open it. But from the laughter of the demons that ensues we gather that the bitterness of disillusionment is to be Bill's particular Hell.

BILL: Hullo, Mother! You there? Hullo! You there? It's Bill, Mother!

(The gates swing heavily open, revealing empty night and stars.)

BILL: *(staggering and gazing into the revealed Nothing in which far stars go wandering)* Stars! Bloomin' great stars! There ain't no Heaven, Jim!

(Ever since the revelation, a cruel and violent laugh has arisen off. It increases, etc.) . . .

Economy of Means

But whether the moment be one of dramatic recognition, or character revelation or emotional functioning or anything else, light is always turned on one phase of character in one moment with only as much before and after as is needed to give that moment its full dramatic value. This is another way of saying that it is necessary to employ the greatest economy of means — whether in the number of minor crises, the richness of characterization,* or the elaboration of atmosphere† — consistent with the utmost emphasis. This economy may descend even to the language and the number of words used and should be exercised in proportion to the proximity of the crisis. "Words," says old Thomas Rymer, "are a sort of heavy baggage which were better out of the way at the push of the action."[17]

The question, then, is never "Given the means, how great an effect can you produce?" It is, rather, "Desiring the effect, what are the least means with which you can produce it?"[12]

Unity of Impression

One of the happy results of this strict economy is the preservation of Artistic Unity or Unity of Impression. This means unity in the mode of treatment which determines the emotional tone of the play. (Cf. Appendix 2.) For the playwright who fixes his eye on the crucial moment and never swerves from the principle of economy will not be tempted to range through a variety of types, moods and styles of drama calculated to leave on the

*Characterization is defined on Page 42.
†Atmosphere is defined on Page 66.

mind of the audience the mingled impressions of a three-act play. For in an ordinary play some types do mingle freely, *e. g.,* farce and melodrama, comedy and tragedy. The moods, too, may be combined by a skilful dramatist, as they are, in many gloomy plots with happy endings.

But the one-act-play is more insistent upon artistic unity than any other dramatic form and "should never or very daintily mix hornpipes and funerals."[18] However, if a genius, for higher purposes, should disobey this law, "let us forget our primer and only examine whether he has attained this higher purpose."[19]

EXERCISE ON THE SINGLENESS OF EFFECT:

After reading plays in class, answer the following questions:

1. What is the single impression produced by this play?
2. What situation in this play presents the vital crisis of the action, *i. e.,* the moment of the play in which plot, character, theme and atmosphere come to focus and create the single impression of the piece most vividly?
3. Does this central dynamic moment illustrate and illumine all that went before?
4. Is the single impression produced by the play as a whole, *i. e.,* by a harmony of all elements (one major and the others subordinate) working to a single end? (As a test: Would it be difficult for the average play-goer to differentiate in the final impression what the plot, or theme, or character, or atmosphere has contributed?)

5. Is the single impression dependent primarily on
   a) plot?
   b) character?
   c) theme?
   d) atmosphere?
6. Sketch briefly the reasons for your reply to No. 5.
7. Is "Beauty and the Jacobin" by Booth Tarkington a genuine one-act-play?
8. Discuss the following definition: "A one-act-play is an orderly representation of life arousing emotion in an audience. It is characterized by superior unity and economy; it is playable in a comparatively short space of time; and it is intended to be assimilated as a whole."[12]

CHAPTER III

Continuity

Continuity means uninterruptedness, or complete development in one act. An act is a unit of presentation, during which the playwright wants the attention of the audience unbroken. This is equivalent to saying that the scene should not be changed, or the curtain lowered; in other words, that the unity of time and the unity of place should be strictly observed.

Continuity and the Single Effect

This obligation is not imposed by the nature of art or drama in general, as the French critics believed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but by the specific note of the one-act-play, viz.: the single effect. Failure to observe these unities will, as a rule, do violence to the single impression. For between acts, "the auditors will reflect, ponder, discuss, agree, question, reconcile, and this upon a basis of life's norms."[12] The following act must, then, make an impression all its own. Thus, even where the emotion, theme and situation are closely unified, if the action is not continuous, but broken into distinct segments, a play in so many short acts is the result. See for instance, "The Gods of the Mountain" by Dunsany. An exception, however, will be found in Drinkwater's play, "X = O," where, though the scene flashes back and forth, from the Greek camp to Troy, the singleness of impression is retained because of the identical situation in each.

Unity of Time

This word "continuity" limits the themes of the one-act-play far more than is the case in the short-story. It imposes a unity of time more rigid than even the Greeks knew. The Greeks were

satisfied with a unity of "ideal" time.* The one-act-play must have a unity of time that is "real" in the dramatic sense. That is, it must seem real. Ten minutes may conceivably represent an hour, but not the passage of a whole night. To represent long periods of "real" dramatic time, a convention is necessary. The curtain is lowered, the lights are changed, and the audience reads in the program, "Nine o'clock the next morning." This convention, however frequent in other species of the drama, is almost never allowed in the one-act-play, for fear of the inevitable effect upon the audience.

Unity of Place

With regard to unity of place, more and more latitude may be allowed as time goes on, because of the progress in stage mechanics and designing. The former, with its instantaneous shifting of scenes, has eliminated the old-time delay that tended to blur the single impression, while the latter, ever drawing less attention to details on the stage, and laying ever greater emphasis on the mood of the play itself, is considerably reducing the distraction attendant upon the rising of the curtain. This distraction, it need hardly be noted, is quite as perilous to the effect of the one-act-play as the time element, mentioned above.

EXERCISE ON CONTINUITY:

"The Last Leaf" by O. Henry, "The Sire de Maletroit's Door" by Stevenson and "The Monkey's Paw" by Jacobs, are admirable short-stories. Are they good material for one-act-plays?

*When action, which really required a very much longer space of time, is represented as happening in a few hours, it is said to take place in "ideal time." For instance, the "Antigone" of Sophocles supposes two days at least for the action, while in Euripides' "Supplices," Theseus goes from Athens to Thebes, forty good English miles one way, gives battle, and sends a messenger back with the news, while Aethra and the chorus have but thirty-six verses, "Which is not," as Dryden says, "for every verse a mile."

If "The Prodigal Son" were to be made into a one-act-play, what rearrangement would be necessary?

Do the following plays violate the principle of continuity? "The Tents of the Arabs;" "The Emperor Jones;" "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals;" "The Will" and "The Gods of the Mountain."

CHAPTER IV

Presentation on the Stage

A play might measure up to all the ideals touched upon in the foregoing chapters, and still fail utterly when shown in the theatre. In examining now the strictly theatrical aspect of the one-act-play, its presentability, the two following questions must be considered:

1. Is it mechanically or physically possible to achieve the effects demanded?
2. Will the play hold the interest of an average audience?

To answer the first, common sense must be joined with a technical knowledge that lies beyond our present scope. To answer the second, we must examine that element which, more than any other, is responsible for interest in an average audience, viz.:

Action

Definition of Action

"By action is meant an event or occurrence arranged according to a controlling idea and having its meaning made apparent by the characters."[2]

Action, then, is to be distinguished from motion. Motion is mere change of position and can be seen in running water or in the waving branches of a tree. If a butler, for example, opens the door as part of his routine, we call this occurrence motion. A mechanical device could do as much. If a father now opens the

same door and waits grimly for his ne'er-do-well to leave, we call it action. "There is no true action except that of a will conscious of itself, conscious of the means which it employs for its fulfilment, one which adapts them to its goal. All other forms of action are only imitations, counterfeits or parodies."[16]

Importance of Action

"Most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For tragedy is an imitation not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action and its end is a mode of action, not a quality."[15] Moreover, although "without action there cannot be a tragedy, there may be without character."[15]

For stressing the importance of action, there are three reasons:

1. It is more dramatic than any other element. "Character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse."[15] "The most beautiful colors (characterization) laid on confusedly will not give as much pleasure as the chalk outline (action) of a portrait."[6]

2. Action is nearer to the truth than speech. "Speech is not merely a mode of expression, but also a much used device for concealing thought." Men are what men do. Things are what things do.

3. Action most easily arouses an emotion and a play is the shortest distance between two emotions. "We laugh, we weep with those that laugh or weep; we gape, stretch, and are very dotterels, by example. Action is speaking to the eyes."[17]

Popularity of Action

Not only is action an essential part of a play, but the most popular as well. Even in the earliest Mediæval drama, the "Resurrection" of A.D. 967, we find more "rubrics" or directions for action, than spoken lines. The Elizabethan audience had such a passion for seeing people *do* things that "The Knight of the Burning Pestle" was written to satirize their taste. When in some exceptions, as in Corneille and Racine, in Restoration comedy, and occasionally even now in such things as "Back to Methuselah," characterization and dialogue submerge the action, we see dramas written for a special class and flourishing only for a short time as real plays. On the contrary, most enduring types of drama are built upon plots which can be conveyed by mere pantomime. New York crowded The Century Theatre for a year to see "The Miracle," whose only words were those of the Pater Noster. "In fact all Europe over," says Thomas Rymer, "plays have been represented with great applause in a tongue unknown and sometimes without any language at all."[17]

This is even more true to-day than in Rymer's century. For the Motion Pictures, acting on this principle, have taken the plays of every language and fashioned them into a kind of international drama. During the process the literary element has vanished, but there still remains the most important part of the play, the action.

Varieties of Action

Action may be predominantly physical or predominantly mental. We use the word "predominantly" to call attention to the fact that both kinds of action are always present in some proportion. It would be anomalous to speak of action that was merely physical — the proper word would be motion — while merely mental action could never be produced on the stage. For brevity's sake, however, we shall use the terms physical and mental.

1. PHYSICAL: From "A Night at An Inn."

(The other two follow Bill. All three are now crouching inside the door Right. The Toff puts the ruby beside him on the table. He lights a cigarette.)

(The door in back opens so slowly that you can scarcely say at what moment it began. The Toff picks up his paper.)

(A native of India wriggles along the floor ever so slowly, seeking cover from chairs. . . . Bill watches to see if any more are coming. Then he leaps forward alone . . . and knifes the priest, etc.)

2. MENTAL: From "Overtones."

Two women, Harriet and Margret, are seated at a tea table alone, except for their real selves, Hetty and Maggie, who stand heavily veiled behind their chairs. Margret is the wife of John, a poor artist, whom Harriet, now married to wealth, has always loved. Margret, in despair, has come to persuade Harriet to have her portrait done by John. Throughout the scene, the two ladies chat quietly, while their real selves, Hetty and Maggie, show us the struggle that is going on in the depths of their souls.

HETTY: Must I really pay the full price?

HARRIET: Le Grange thought I would make a good subject.

MAGGIE: *(to Margret)* Let her fish for it.

MARGRET: Of course you would. Why don't you let Le Grange paint you if you *trust* him?

HETTY: She doesn't seem anxious to have John do it.

HARRIET: But if Le Grange isn't accepted by artists, it would be a waste of time to pose for him, wouldn't it?

MARGRET: Yes, I think it would.

MAGGIE: *(passionately, to Hetty across the table)* Give us the order! John is so despondent, he can't endure much longer! Help us! Help me, save us! Etc. . . .

In each of the examples quoted above, it is clear that the action is that of a will conscious of itself;

recognized by the audience as conscious of itself; recognized as belonging to an individual, differentiated from other individuals. In other words, the action is "characteristic."

Characterization

"By character, I mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agent."[15] In other words, it is a disposition resulting from natural or acquired habits, which gives us reason for calling this man generous or vain or courageous or anything else. Characterization is the assigning of a particular disposition to one of the dramatis personæ.

Character and Action

"The character of the hero exerts great influence on the structure of the action, but only that one may thereby account for the inner, consistent, unified action through the characteristic peculiarities of the hero."[2] But while it is true that "muthos," the action, and not "ethos," the characterization, is the essence of drama, "muthos" is like a skeleton, "ethos" the outward charm. For story, independent of character, is trivial and uninteresting.

It is clear, then, that if the Ten Commandments of the theatre can be rolled into this one: "First, last and always, be interesting," and if mere attention can be transformed into interest only by characterization, characterization is of prime importance. That this dictum is true appears from the following discussion:

Theatrical Interest

Theatrical interest is sympathetic concern. It differs from (1) attention, which we give, voluntarily or involuntarily, to a loud noise and (2) curiosity, or the concern of ignorance.

Now, before we can feel real sympathy, before we can "suffer with" another, we must know something of his personality. Seeing a strange old gray-beard out in the rain excites mere curiosity. We do not

know why he is there; we do not know whether or not he likes it. He may be returning from the delicatessen with exultation in his heart; or he may be taking a cure under the doctor's orders. But Lear out on a blasted heath — ah, that is a different matter! We know Lear. We know what he has suffered. He has been characterized for us. We are interested in him. That is our reason for returning to "King Lear" again and again. Mere curiosity would never suffice. In fact, a play which creates mere curiosity is spoiled after the first-night reviewers have revealed the solution. "Subjects full of plot and intrigue," says the Abbé d'Aubignac, "are extremely agreeable at first, but being once known, they do not, the second time, please us so well because they want the grace of novelty."[20]

Interest or sympathetic concern, on the contrary, may be secured even though the outcome is well known, sometimes because the outcome is well known. This occurs in the "response of recognition" as distinguished from the "response of suspense." In proving that the first is the more important, Clayton Hamilton says: "The best part of our enjoyment in the theatre does not spring from vainly wondering what is going to happen, but from eagerly wanting some specific thing to happen" (chiefly because we are interested in the characters), "and in having our want fulfilled."[21] Modern play-goers have, in fact, something of the ancient Greek attitude. They like "to sit like Gods on Olympus watching mortals" (in whom they are interested) "struggle on the plain beneath."[6]

PROPERTIES OF CHARACTERIZATION:

Because of its importance as an element of dramatic literature, characterization must conform to the general rules of truth and proportion. A character is

true, if his essential, accidental and individual traits are convincing. His essential traits are those which he possesses as a rational animal. When these are convincing, we say that the character is Living. His accidental traits are those which he possesses as a Harlem negro or a Colonial Englishman. When these are convincing, we say that the character is Probable. His individual traits are those which he possesses as "himself" with his own particular blend of good and evil. When these are convincing, we say that the character is Consistent.

Let us, then, put our ideas in order and say that characterization must be (I) Probable, (II) Consistent, (III) Living and (IV) Proportionate.

I. *Characterization must be Probable.* The characters must speak and act in a manner that befits their presumed condition in life. In the words of Horace: "It will make a wide difference whether it will be Davos that speaks, or a hero; a man well stricken in years, or a hot, young fellow in his bloom; a matron of distinction or an officious nurse."[22]

Read this in the light of what has been said on theatrical truth. The aim is the appearance of truth, not necessarily the truth itself. For instance, if a bore is to be represented, let him be so idealized that, though like Polonius he bores the other characters on the stage, he may not bore the audience as well. This precaution is particularly to the point when delineating vicious and degenerate characters. Let them seem to talk like degenerates. Spare us the stench of facts. The characterization is amply true if the audience does not advert to its truth or falsity. "True stage illusion consists not in the mind's judging it to be a forest, but in its remission of the judgment that it is not a forest."[23]

This probability of characterization extends even to the relatives with whom a playwright may surround his characters. "What children could be more typical of Polonius than Lærtes and Ophelia? And is not Hamlet himself the inevitable son of his warlike father and charming, inconstant mother?"[24]

II. *Characterization must be Consistent.* The character should maintain the same essential traits from beginning to end. This excludes neither accidental changes, nor revelations of unknown traits.

1. Accidental changes:

An utter craven may lose his power of repartee, but not his cowardice — at least not in the course of a half hour. Essential changes, it is true, take place in life. A real angel at thirteen may be a real fiend at thirty. Even here, however, we can trace consistencies. If, for instance, a man who is brave, full-blooded and passionate, falls from virtue, we find him robbing trains, not alms-boxes. But when these essential changes are found in literature, long and careful development is necessary to give them the appearance of truth — much longer than is possible in a one-act-play. Thus, it takes George Eliot the best part of a lengthy novel to make gay, brilliant, popular, lovable Tito the real villain of "Romola."

2. The revelation of unknown traits.

Usually in drama, rather than a real change from good to evil, we find the gradual unfolding of a character who has been all along just what the audience finally discovers him to be. Macbeth, the slave of an unscrupulous ambition, has discussed with his wife the possibility of murdering the King before the curtain rises on the first act. Then, little by little, as the action proceeds, we come to know him as he really is.

Of course, there must be a limit to this further revelation, and it seems reasonable to place it at that point where the audience feels that it has at last so complete an idea of the character that it would resent a new and conflicting trait.

In the one-act-play, as a general rule, the playwright gives us as soon as possible a sufficiently complete sketch of the character and hastens on to the crisis, since his chief interest is the character's reaction at that moment. At times, this reaction involves a decided change. It is quite possible that a black sheep, distrusted by all the persons in the play, should, as the result of one crisis, show himself to be the hero. But the playwright must in such a case "plant" so carefully that the audience can glimpse, at least upon reflection, the good that is in the seeming villain. Otherwise, when the transformation comes, dramatic truth will be violated. There will be an effect without a preconceivable cause. Even in depicting an inconsistent character let him be, as Aristotle says, "consistently inconsistent."

III. *Characterization must be Living.* The character should be an individualized human being and not a stock character or an abstraction, for interest of an emotional kind is aroused only by the concrete.

IV. *Characterization must be Proportionate.* Each character must enjoy only as much prominence as his importance in the action deserves and the same may be said of each trait in each character. So that here, as in plot work, proportion is a matter of correct emphasis.

When a number of characters are introduced into a one-act-play, one or two are usually selected for detailed individualization. The others are, to use Quiller-Couch's expression, "flattened" into a kind of background. See, for instance, Mrs. Dow-

ey's friends in "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals;" the three lesser thieves and the three priests in "A Night at An Inn;" the guests of the Queen in "The Queen's Enemies."

MEANS OF CHARACTERIZATION:

In life, a man's real nature is but partly known even to his intimates. In the theatre, the audience must know the character at least as well as the character knows himself. This knowledge is gained not only by seeing all his external actions, shooting or stealing, giving alms or making love, but also all the little side touches that help to show us his motives in positing such actions. This characterization begins in a vague way when we first hear his name; our impression of him takes form when we see him appear on the stage; the impression is deepened or corrected when we hear his words, and fixed when he interprets them for us by his whole deportment.

We may, then, divide the means of characterization into the Minor Means, viz., Names, Costume and Make-up, and the Principal Means, viz., Pantomime and Dialogue.

Pantomime and Dialogue are employed here in their broadest possible signification. By pantomime we mean everything that is done on the stage; by dialogue, everything that is said.

THE MINOR MEANS:

1. *Names.* One feels instinctively that Chauncy Tinker is not an All-American-End; that Lizzie never was a day under forty, and Peggy is still in her teens. Thus far may we be prejudiced in reading over the dramatis personæ. Percival Wilde, however, makes a very shrewd remark when he says that a wise playwright "puts himself *in loco parentis*; he names his characters as their forbears would have named them; he uses diminutives as circumstances may warrant and then when this is done, he realizes that it is not the

name, but the action and the dialogue which he allots to each that will mar or make them."[12]

2. *Costume and Make-up.* "The apparel oft proclaims the man" and "the eyes are the windows of the soul" for looking in as well as out. But such quotations should not obscure the fact that judgments based on this kind of observation frequently go astray. Taste has, after all, so little to do with character that what a man wears will give us hardly more than accidental characterization. In essential and individual characterization, clothes are not always to be trusted.

Make-up is a somewhat more reliable index, especially after we have had time to study it carefully. Thus, though we might, at first glance, take Cyrano for a clown, before he has spoken fifty lines we cannot see his preposterous nose, because of the light in his eyes. No one, on the other hand, who can recall the sweet, ingenuous charm of Marlow when, as Lady Macbeth, she welcomed Duncan under her battlements, will ever again rely with perfect confidence on make-up as a means of characterization. It is too easy to "look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it."

THE PRINCIPAL MEANS:

I. Pantomime includes:

1. Facial expression and gesture.
2. Stage business.
3. Exits and entrances.

Examples of characterization by

1. *Facial expression and gesture.* "The Twelve-pound Look."

. . . She is rather clinging to the glory of her gown wistfully, as if not absolutely certain, you know, that it is a glory. . . . She continues to type and Lady Simms, half mesmerized, gazes

at her nimble fingers. The useless woman watches the useful one and she sighs she could not tell why. . . .

Then they see each other and their mouths open, but not for words. After the first surprise, Kate seems to find some humor in the situation, but Harry lowers like a thunder cloud. . . .

2. *Stage business.* Though facial expression and gesture are frequently called "stage business," it is more usual to reserve that term for actions which terminate in some exterior body. Thus, pointing at a boy is a gesture, beating him is stage business; raising and lowering the arms are gestures, raising a teapot and pounding a typewriter are examples of stage business.

The importance of this means of characterization can hardly be exaggerated. Pouncing upon a cake, opening a letter, blowing smoke in another's face, will often give the audience a more complete and vivid portrait than will pages of description. The following example is from "Trifles":

(. . . Then Mrs. Hale rises, hands tight together, looking intensely at Mrs. Peters, whose eyes make a slow turn, finally meeting Mrs. Hale's. A moment, Mrs. Hale holds her, then her own eyes point the way to where the box is concealed. Suddenly Mrs. Peters throws back quilt pieces and tries to put the box in the bag she is wearing. It is too big. She opens the box, starts to take the bird out, cannot touch it, goes to pieces, stands there helpless. Sound of a knob turning in the other room. Mrs. Hale snatches the box and puts it in the pocket of her big coat. . . .)

3. *Exits and Entrances.* Note the sharp contrasts of these two first entrances, both from "Ile," which give us at once the most important plot characteristics of Keeney and his wife.

There is a noise of someone coming slowly down the companionway stairs. The Steward hurries to his stacked-up dishes. He is so nervous from fright that he knocks off the top one, which falls and breaks on the floor. He stands aghast, trembling with dread. Ben is violently rubbing off the organ with a piece

of cloth, which he has snatched from his pocket. Captain Keeney appears in the doorway on the right, and slowly comes into the cabin.

The door in the rear is opened and Mrs. Keeney stands in the doorway. She is a slight, sweet-faced little woman, primly dressed in black. Her eyes are red from weeping and her face is drawn and pale. She takes in the cabin with a frightened glance and stands as if fixed to the spot by some nameless dread, clasping and unclasping her hands nervously. The two men turn and look at her.

This last exit is from "Allison's Lad." Here Tom Winwood's struggle to keep up a show of spirit when the time has come for him to die in the courtyard below, sums up the whole impression of his character. We see in his exit the final victory of his mother's courage over his father's cowardice.

. . . WINWOOD: *(Takes his hat and turns to Goring and Hopton, with a pitiful effort at jauntiness)* God be wi' you, boys!

(Crosses and holds out his hand to Strickland.)

Sir William, I'll try. But —— can't you help me? Can't you help me when —— *(Clings to Strickland's hand.)*

STRICKLAND: I can help you. You shall bear you as becomes her son.

WINWOOD: Aye, sir!

STRICKLAND: And I shall know it. God keep you.

WINWOOD: *(Faces about, to Boyer)* I am ready, sir. *(Goes to the door and, on the threshold, stands at salute.)* You shall have news of me, Sir William! *(Winwood goes out and Boyer, with the cloak, follows him.)*

II. DIALOGUE:

The Form of Dialogue

Dialogue should at once be natural and literary. It is possible to achieve style without deserting nature if we "keep the concentration of art plausibly near the language of life." In fact, drifting away from this "language of life" usually results in obscurity and affectation. At the same time

there is peril in too great a desire for this "language of life." Especially is this to be stressed with regard to coarseness, as noted above, highly technical language, and dialect. Of the last named, Baker remarks: "Very few audiences know any dialect thoroughly enough to permit a writer to use it with absolute accuracy. The moment dialect begins to show the need of a glossary it is defeating its own ends."[25]

The Aim of Dialogue

Every sentence should be alive with interest in its connection with the plot and flavored with the personality of the character speaking. Briefly, then, the aim of the dialogue is to advance the plot and to characterize. In most plays both aims are prominent. In fact, the first aim, that of advancing the plot, is always in evidence. "The plot ought to be so constructed that even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place."[15] But in plays of the melodramatic and farcical type the second aim, characterization, is of distinctly minor importance. As for instance in "A Night at An Inn" and "The Wonder Hat." In some of our ultra-modern plays characterization is quite ignored by deliberately leaving the dialogue unassigned.

Varieties of Dialogue

We may derive our knowledge of the neighbors from several different varieties of dialogue. The man who lives in "No. 32" may lean over the hedge and give us his confidential impressions of the man in "No. 33." Or "33" himself may come and manifest his conscience to us. On the stage we call both these varieties "Characterization by Description." They are valuable only when we can properly estimate the knowledge and veracity of the speakers. According to a most reasonable convention, however, a wholly disinterested character can always be relied on to give us a true estimate of his associates

and is for this reason usually selected as the mouthpiece of the author. But the most reliable way to take the stature of "33," is to observe him closely when he is talking about something else and has no thought or desire of self-revelation. This, in a play, is called "Characterization by Conversation" and is to be preferred to any other kind. Although this is as far as we can go with the analysis of ordinary neighbors, on the stage a very frank theatrical convention, at times, allows the character to speak out his thoughts in a most unnatural manner. This is called "Characterization by Soliloquy and Asides."

Examples of Characterization by Dialogue:

1. *Description* is a term applied to the picture of a character drawn by other characters in the play.

For example: "A Night at An Inn."

SNIGGERS: What's his idea, I wonder?

BILL: I don't know. . . .

SNIGGERS: 'Ow long did he rent the pub for?

BILL: You never know with him.

SNIGGERS: It's lonely enough.

BILL: 'Ow long did you rent the pub for, Toffy?

(The Toff continues to read the sporting paper; he takes no notice of what is said.)

SNIGGERS: 'E's such a Toff!

BILL: Yet 'e's clever, no mistake.

SNIGGERS: Those clever ones are the beggars to make a muddle, etc.

It should be noted that complete reliance on such description, when it is possible for a character to reveal himself by his own conversation, is indicative of loose craftsmanship. But in characterizing the speaker himself or in planting for another's entrance, the utility of these pictures is obvious.

2. *Conversation* in which a man unwittingly reveals his own nature is the most artistic form of characterization by dialogue.

For example: "Spreading the News."

BARTLEY: Indeed, it's a poor country and a scarce country to be living in. But I'm thinking if I went to America, it's long ago the day I'd be dead.

MRS. FALLON: So you might be indeed.

BARTLEY: And it's a great expense for a poor man to be buried in America.

MRS. FALLON: Never fear, Bartley Fallon, but I'll give you a good burying the day you'll die.

BARTLEY: Maybe it's yourself will be buried in the graveyard of Cloonmara before me, Mary Fallon, and I myself that will be dying unbeknownst some night and no one a-near me.

MRS. FALLON: Leave off talking of dying. It might be twenty years you'll be living yet.

BARTLEY: I'm thinking if I'll be living at the end of twenty years, it's a very old man I'll be then. . . .

Of all conversation, the most skilful is that which not only answers the need of the moment, but gives, as well, glimpses of the past and future.

For example: "The Twelve-pound Look."

SIR HARRY: *(Jovially, but with an enquiring eye)* What a different existence yours is from that poor, lonely wretch's.

LADY SIMMS: Yes — But she had a very contented face.

SIR HARRY: *(With a stamp of his foot)* All put on. What?

LADY SIMMS: I didn't say anything.

SIR HARRY: *(Snapping)* One would think you envied her!

LADY SIMMS: Envied? Oh, no —— but I thought she looked so alive. It was while she was working the machine.

SIR HARRY: Alive? That's no life. It is you that are alive. *(Curtly)* I'm busy, Emmy. *(He sits at his writing table.)*

LADY SIMMS: I'm sorry. I'll go, Harry. *(Inconsequentially)* Are they very expensive?

SIR HARRY: What?

LADY SIMMS: Those machines?

In this one glance we can see all the unnumbered little humiliations that have made Lady Simms the timid, colorless creature that Sir Harry wants her to be. And in the very same glance, lifting the curtain of the future, we can also see in her nascent determination to take up stenography, a situation wherein Sir Harry will meet with full retribution.

3 and 4. *Soliloquy and Aside.* In early drama, nobody thought of questioning these unblushing pieces of theatricalism. In fact, it would be hard to conceive Shakespeare without them. But even in 1845 Edgar Allan Poe, who reviewed for the public press an "extraordinary attraction" of Anna Cora Mowatt's, was terribly upset "by the reading of private letters in a loud rhetorical tone; and preposterous soliloquizing; and the even more preposterous 'asides'." This does not mean, however, that they immediately lost favor and expired. Even as late as 1894 Henry Arthur Jones wrote: "The drama could not make a greater mistake than to abdicate the soliloquy . . . the dramatist's only means for showing to his audience those shadowy scenes . . . those starry altitudes and hellish abysses where every man walks alone with his God."[4] Adopting the opposite viewpoint, Wm. Archer says: "A drama with soliloquy and asides is like a picture with inscribed labels issuing from the mouths of the figures."[6] He calls it "obsolete," "slovenly," "intolerable" — "a disturbing anachronism." He is clearly speaking, however, of the Realistic Drama that was supreme in 1912 with David Belasco as its high priest. At that time the revolt against such realism was hardly as yet a murmur. In ten years wonderful things have happened. New ideals in theatre building and production are bringing back old ideals in play writing. Kenneth MacGowan predicts that "the soliloquy will return again as a natural

and proper relation of the mind of the character. Even the aside may redevelop as a deliberate piece of theatricalism. . . . It will be the frank and open intercourse between the actor and his audience, a reaffirmation that this is a play which is being acted, a remarkable game between these two."[26] Game or no game, however, the aside, of its nature, strikes at the very heart of suggestion. See, for instance, how "A Sunny Morning," by S. and J. A. Quintero, was utterly ruined by substituting grotesque and blatant asides for delicate and artistic inference. The soliloquy is more reasonable and as one playwright says: "If I can lay a proper basis for it, I can also make it seem probable and then I can use it to good advantage." It would seem, then, that if the play is written to be produced with real food and china dogs and stuffed canaries, the soliloquy would be offensive. But in a play of the imagination, whether written for the stage of Sophocles, Shakespeare or Gordon Craig, where nothing is too literal and everything symbolic and conventional, it is not merely to be tolerated but encouraged.

EXERCISE IN CHARACTERIZATION:

Make a selection of characters from plays familiar to the class and answer the following questions in regard to them:

1. What is the elemental quality of the characters? Affectionate? Egotistic? Etc.
2. How are they characterized? By action? By dialogue? By their likes and dislikes? By racial trait? By peculiarity of manner, speech, appearance?
3. Are they dramatic, *i.e.*, do they react emotionally?

4. Do they make us feel their point of view? Their motives?
5. Is the main character strongly responsive to stimuli? (*i. e.,* highly emotional rather than intellectual?)
6. Do we feel that his or her potential reserve is large?
7. Does this playwright personalize supernumeraries too highly?
8. Has the playwright introduced unnecessarily any supernumeraries merely as contrivances to forward the plot? To fill the stage picture?
9. Has he introduced any characters as foils? To whom?
10. Has the playwright used any of the minor-major characters as foils to more important major characters?
11. Is the major character the most highly individualized personality on the stage? (He should be since he is the one going through the crisis, and the crisis searches and reveals individual reaction most truly.)
12. Is the chief character, supposing a perfect delineation, worthy of the attention of the audience? (Be careful of judgment on this. — Cf. "The Clod.")
13. What is the dominant trait of the chief character?
14. Is the note of the chief character's dominant trait struck in other minor characters by likeness or contrast for artistic effect? (Cf. The Toff's cleverness and the cleverness of the sailors in "A Night at An Inn.")
15. Is the personality too complex? (*i.e.,* as set forth in the play. The playwright can give us a complex character, we can feel that he is

such, but the other elements in his character must not be thrust forward, and if not eliminated they must be softened and harmonized with the dominant trait. If possible, the playwright should make us feel that his dominant trait is the key to the suggested complexity.)

16. Distinguish in the chief character:
    a) The essential: is he convincingly human? (Living.)
    b) The accidental: is he an authentic human, Negro, Slav, Englishman, etc.; is he an authentic human of his place, time and circumstances? (Probable.)
    c) The individual: are we convinced that he is himself? (*i.e.,* do we fail to find in him unexplained and unjustified contradictions in thought, emotion, manner, etc.?) (Consistent.)
17. Has the playwright introduced too many important characters?
18. Is each situation full of character brought out by the conditions of the situation? Do we grow in knowledge of character as situation follows situation?
19. Does he work this up by getting opposite characters boldly relieved, one against the other, in scenes where we have them react in a totally different way to the same stimulus?
20. Has the playwright been careful in the matter of small details? These frequently reveal character and precipitate character crises quite as deep as would seemingly more important affairs.
21. Has the playwright been especially happy in choice of names for his characters?

22. Do we get at the characters chiefly through their actions and words, or does the playwright depend too much for delineation of major characters on descriptions?
23. Has the playwright depended too much on program descriptions, etc.?
24. Has the playwright depended too much on mere costume and purely mechanical means for delineation of character?
25. Is the dialogue, in general, dramatic? Does it advance the plot? Reveal character?
26. Is the dialogue natural and literary?
27. Is the dialogue brief, clear, direct, spontaneous? Loose or insipid? Witty, didactic, cynical?
28. Was the soliloquy or the aside introduced? Was it justified?

PART TWO

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

PART TWO

The Construction of the One-Act-Play

Every one-act-play is built about some kind of crisis or solution which must always have, as in life, an origin and a culmination. In a dramatic narrative the origin is a situation which causes a conflict of desires. In the culmination there is a struggle for a solution of the conflict and, finally, a solution is found which reveals character. Call these three stages the beginning, the middle and the end.

"A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be.

"A middle is that which follows something, as some other thing follows it.

"An end is that which of itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity or as a rule, but has nothing following it."[15]

The beginning and end are to be understood here as the relative, not the absolute beginning and end. The events of life are so intimately related with the past and the future that the absolute beginning and end of any human crisis would lead the inquirer to Eden on the one hand and Jehosephat on the other. When we see a comedy end with a wedding, we know that it is only the immediate solution of one little crisis and in that sense the end, but it is, of course, the beginning as well of a hundred other crises in a hundred other lives. Any actual event is, in the words of Whitman: "An acme of things accomplished and an

encloser of things to be." When we say, then, that an action has a relative beginning and end we mean that, though human experience is an almost endless parade, "a play is like the photograph of one passing section."[16] We must seek to have the limits of our photograph enclose some part, as far as may be, complete in itself.

CHAPTER V

The Beginning of a One-Act-Play

Where Should the Play Begin?

Horace was careful to tell us not to go back too far in presenting causes; not to "date Diomede's return from Meleager's death nor trace the rise of the Trojan war from Leda's eggs."[22] In most struggles there are separate lines of causation which ultimately converge. That is why, in fact, we call the outline of a struggle, conventionalized by art, "a plot." For this means "a weaving," and presupposes strands that are brought together. In some one-act-plays the lines are outside the frame of the play and the curtain rises at their convergence, *e.g.,* "The Welsh Honeymoon," "A Night at An Inn," "The Twelve-pound Look." In some, the whole action begins and ends within the frame, as in most of Lady Gregory's plays. In any case, this convergence of separate threads should be as near the crisis and climax as atmosphere, characters and plot will allow.

How Should the Play Begin?

As a general principle in modern drama the opening should be "brisk and valuable, but not indispensable."[6] In the one-act-play, however, as a result of the strict economy of this art form and of the circumstances of production (a playwright never knows whether his one-act-play will be first or fourth on the programme), all of the dialogue should be indispen-

sable. Hence, to occupy the first moments when lines are seldom heard, significant pantomime is popular. For example in "Ile,"

At the rise of the curtain, there is a moment of intense silence. Then the Steward enters and commences to clear the table of the few dishes which still remain on it, after the Captain's dinner. He is an old, grizzled man, dressed in dungaree pants, a sweater and a woolen cap with ear flaps. His manner is sullen and angry. He stops stacking up the plates and casts a quick glance upward at the skylight; then tiptoes over to the closed door in the rear and listens with his ear pressed to the crack. What he hears makes his face darken and he mutters a furious curse. There is a noise from the doorway on the right, and he darts back to the table.

We call this significant pantomime because it does not seem like a mere time filler. On the contrary, it prepares for the exposition by giving rise to four questions in the mind of the audience: 1. Why is the steward angry? 2. Who is up on deck? 3. What is happening in the next room? 4. What is the steward afraid of?

Once the dialogue begins, there are three types of opening. What follows is a paraphrase from "The Craftsmanship of the One-Act-Play."[12]

A) *Abrupt.* In which the complication begins at the rise of the curtain and the exposition is reduced to a minimum, *e. g.,* "The Lost Silk Hat."

The Caller stands on the doorstep, faultlessly dressed, but without a hat. At first he shows despair, then a new thought engrosses him. Enter the Laborer.

THE CALLER: Excuse me a moment. Excuse me — but — I'd be greatly obliged to you if — if you could see your way —— in fact you can be of great service to me if ——

THE LABORER: Glad to do what I can, sir.

THE CALLER: Well all I really want you to do is just to ring that bell and go up and say — er — say that you've come to see the drains or anything like that, you know, and get hold of my hat for me. . . .

B) *Extended.* Which may be merely deliberate or inflected.

1) *Deliberate.* In which the exposition precedes the complication, *e. g.,* "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals."

2) *Inflected.* In which the dramatist "setting the play in motion by a single vigorous thrust follows with an introduction, fully aware that sheer momentum will keep his action going until he is ready to return to it,"[12] *e. g.,* "The Twelve-pound Look."

The type of opening to be selected for an individual play is determined:

1. By the simplicity or complexity of the setting, the number of characters on the stage, and the richness of the costumes. For "the audience will lock its ears until its eyes are satisfied."[12]

2. By the relative importance of story, character, or atmosphere,

a) As a general thing the abrupt opening is most effective, if the story interest is to be uppermost, "if the characters are apparently usual exponents of an unusual action,"[12] *e. g.,*"The Lost Silk Hat."

b) The extended opening is more effective, if character interest is to be uppermost, if the action rises visibly from the characters, or if atmosphere is to be evoked, *e. g.,*

1. Deliberate opening: "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," and "Allison's Lad."

2. Inflected opening: "The Emperor Jones," and "The Twelve-pound Look."

What Should the Beginning Accomplish?

The beginning should enlist the interest of the spectators and head their anticipation in a definite direction; "help them to see whither they are going while leaving them to wonder how they will get there."[6]

This is accomplished by:

1. Creation of a definite impression.
2. Exposition.
3. Fingerposts.
4. The answering of the questions: Who? Where? When?

These aims are, in many cases, only mentally distinct.

The exposition may contain fingerposts which create a definite impression or, again, a definite impression is, in itself, sometimes a fingerpost.

1. Creation of a Definite Impression:

The definite impression, which Freytag calls "die einleitende Akkord," appeals to the nerves rather than to the intelligence. When, for instance, the curtain rises on "Beauty and the Jacobin" an impression of nervous fear is created by Louis and Ann before a word is spoken. The gloom of the garret increases the impression. In fact, our definite impression might be called the first stress laid upon the atmosphere of the play. When we use the term atmosphere, we understand "the expression of a background, making more vivid and real a central action because of the relationship with which it invests it."[12]

This background of atmosphere may be physical, dependent, that is, on local color and environment or psychological, a matter of impression and mood.

Local color and environment are developed by the time and place of action, costuming, stage business, pantomime and dialogue. Impression and mood are found rather in emotional effects, qualities of character, impulses, relationships, influences and reactions of the inner life.

These atmospheric conditions may be developed from:

Time.— Night, Autumn, war, Christmas.

Place.— The home, the streets, the church, the mill, the seacoast, the jungle, the slums, the mountains.

Occupation.— The fisherman, the sailor, the gambler, the thief, the wife.

Surrounding conditions.— Prosperity, poverty, temptation, illness, education, personal tastes, spiritual quality of character.[27]

2. Exposition:

As in life, the causes of a crisis must be traced back sometimes for years, so in a play frequently an essential part of the story falls outside the plot action. Explanation of the events which occurred before the opening of the play is called exposition. This gives us "the seed of circumstance from which the action rises."

Where Should the Exposition Occur?

It may be distributed through the action or it may be found in the very climax of the play, *e.g.,* "In the Zone" and "The Twelve-pound Look." In the majority of cases, however, we shall find most of it in the beginning, because as the action grows more intricate towards the end and the audience becomes more engrossed in the outcome, there will be resentment felt if the action is interrupted for explanatory purposes. So it is that usually twenty lines of history, which might be appropriate at the opening of the play, would be exasperating at the crisis.

RULES FOR EXPOSITION:[12]

1. Since exposition is necessary for a right understanding of the play, the action should not be allowed to accumulate too great force until the exposition is complete.
2. If an action is to rise early to a high plane of interest, the exposition should be compact and rapid or should be accomplished through the beginning episode of the action itself.
3. If an action is to rise deliberately, if the expository material itself possesses or can be made to possess great interest, action and exposition may be closely interwoven, the latter terminating at a point comparatively late in the play.
4. Interrupt the action with exposition only when the exposition is of equal or greater interest than the action.

KINDS OF EXPOSITION:

Exposition is classified according to its relation with the plot, as Intrinsic and Extrinsic; according to its relation with the audience as Interesting and Uninteresting; according to its relation with the characters, as Natural and Unnatural.

I. *Intrinsic.* Exposition is intrinsic when it forms part of the plot action, *e. g.*, "In the Zone." Here Smitty's love affair, which had come to a close months before, is made to furnish a heart-breaking climax.

II. *Extrinsic.* Exposition is extrinsic when it is merely preliminary information given to clarify the action. This information may be given in various ways:

a) By a chorus, or a chorus and protagonist, *e. g.*, "The Dyspeptic Ogre."

The Jester begins the play with a kind of prologue, but not content with that, he squats on the stage at the side and explains, from time to time, things which he feels may be obscure.

b) By a dumb-show or prologue, *e. g.*, "Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil."

The scene is a kitchen.

The opening is when you will.

Before the opening of the curtains, the Prologue enters upon the forestage and summons the Device Bearer, who carries a large copper pot.

PROLOGUE: This is a copper pot. *(The Device Bearer shows it to the audience, carefully.)* It is filled with boiling water. *(The Device Bearer makes the sound of bubbling water.)* It is on the fire. See the flames. *(The Device Bearer sets the pot in the centre of the forestage and blows under it with a pair of bellows.)* And see the water boiling over. *(The Device Bearer again makes sound of bubbling water and then withdraws to where he can see the play from the side of the forestage.)* We are looking into the kitchen of the Boy whose mother left him alone. I do not know where she has gone, but I do know that he is gathering lentils now.

YOU: What are lentils?

PROLOGUE: A lentil? Why a lentil, don't you see, is not a bean nor yet a pea; but it is akin to both . . . You must imagine that the Boy has built the fire and set the water boiling. He is very industrious, but you need not feel sorry for him. His mother is very good to him and he is safe. Are you ready now? . . . Very well. Be quiet.

(The Prologue claps his hands twice, the curtains open . . . etc.)

c) By a native and an exceedingly inquisitive stranger who has just arrived; by the confidante who knows nothing of her friend's affairs; by a deaf old person who has heard nothing of the stirring events going on about him; by the in-

evitable maid who is forever dusting off the first part of the act and inevitably divulging the history of the family; etc.; *e.g.*, "The Golden Doom."

SECOND SENTRY: . . . Where is the king?

FIRST SENTRY: He rows in his golden barge with ambassadors or whispers with captains, concerning future wars. The stars spare him!

SECOND SENTRY: Why do you say "The stars spare him?"

FIRST SENTRY: Because if a doom from the stars fall suddenly on a king, it swallows up his people and all things round about him and his palace falls and the walls of his city and citadel, and the apes come in from the woods and the large beasts from the desert, so that you would not say that a king had been there at all.

SECOND SENTRY: But why should a doom from the stars fall on the king?

FIRST SENTRY: Because he seldom placates them . . . etc.

d) By telephones, stenographers, dictographs, radios and what not.

III. *Interesting.* Exposition is interesting when a question is first made to arise in the mind of the audience, to which the exposition will be the required answer; *e. g.*, in "Allison's Lad," the audience asks why these men are here and why Colonel Strickland is so concerned about the boy, before the exposition gives the answers. Of course, obscurity in exposition will also arouse the audience to questions, but irritation at the author cannot be mistaken for interest in the play. For another example of interesting exposition take "Beauty and the Jacobin."

ANNE: *(at the window)* People are crowding in front of the wine shop across the street.

(AUDIENCE: Why? What's all the excitement about?)

LOUIS: Naturally, reading the list of the proscribed that came at noon. . . . For a good bet, our own names — yes, her's, too, are all three in the former.

(AUDIENCE: Ah! Aristocrats in hiding. But "her's, too," whom does he mean?) . . .

ELOISE: Is he still there?

ANNE: I lost sight of him in the crowd . . . etc.

(AUDIENCE: Who is it?)

LOUIS: Watch for Master Spy.

ANNE: I cannot see him . . . etc.

(AUDIENCE: So, that's who he is!) . . . etc.

IV. *Uninteresting.* Exposition is uninteresting when the antecedent facts are shown before the audience makes any mental inquiry.

Even exposition which is essentially extrinsic and uninteresting may be accidentally interesting, *i.e.*, it may charm an audience because of some auxiliary factor such as beauty of language, wit or the inherent appeal of the scenes themselves. It is still uninteresting exposition because the technical manner of presenting the fact, which constitutes the exposition, is an uninteresting manner.

V. *Natural.* Exposition is natural where there is an adequate reason for one character imparting a piece of information to another. "Information, like water, flows naturally down hill. Information flows from the well informed to the less informed, to the least informed, the first two being persons or things in the play and the last being the audience."[12] For example: "Riders to the Sea":

CATHLEEN: What is it you have?

NORA: The young priest is after bringing them. It's a shirt and a plain stocking we've got off a drowned man in Donegal. We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, sometime herself will be down looking by the sea.

CATHLEEN: How would they be Michael's, Nora? How would he go the length of that way to the far North?

NORA: The young priest says he's known the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial, by the grace of God, and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, "with crying and lamenting."

CATHLEEN: Did you ask him, would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

NORA: "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you be not afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living."

In the course of these few lines we have learned that the old woman's son has been drowned; that the body has not been found; that the old woman is constantly mourning for him; and that her only remaining son, Bartley, is about to make a perilous journey. The difficulty of exposition in the present instance was increased by the fact that both sisters were equally well acquainted with all that had transpired. In order to create an inequality, and allow the information "to flow down hill" the wet clothing and the conversation with the young priest are introduced.

VI. *Unnatural.* Exposition is unnatural when there is no adequate reason for the information imparted. For example: "A Night at An Inn."

SNIGGERS: I don't like this place!

BILL: Why not?

SNIGGERS: I don't like the looks of it.

BILL: He's keeping us here, because here those niggers can't find us. The three heathen priests what was looking for us so. But we want to go and sell our ruby soon. . . .

This is unnatural exposition because the other merchant sailors know perfectly well why they are being kept there; they know perfectly well who "those niggers" are, and they are equally aware of their desire to sell the ruby.

3. FINGERPOSTS:

A Fingerpost is an indication of the path that the plot is following. At the risk of mixing metaphors, we may call it also a bait for interest or a hint of the action to come.

PURPOSE OF FINGERPOSTS:

These hints are introduced to keep the audience "thinking of the end and wondering how it is going to get there,"[6] in other words, to foreshadow, but not to forestall, the outcome.

Though fingerposts may occur any time before the crisis, they are of particular value here in the beginning of the play.

KINDS OF FINGERPOSTS:

A. A warning note is sometimes struck in the form of prophecy or foreboding, as, *e. g.,* in "Riders to the Sea."

MAURYA: He is gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He is gone now and when the black night is falling, I'll have no son left me in the world. . . .

B. Traits of character frequently prepare us for the crisis, as, *e. g.,* in "The Clod."

Brutish stupidity, fear and anger lead to the double murder. There are a dozen places where these qualities flash out and we say to ourselves: "That woman is going to turn on them yet."

C. The idea is sometimes emphasized by repetition in the dialogue, as, *e. g.,* in "A Night at An Inn."

. . . the three heathen priests that was looking for us so. . . . Who told them you had the ruby? You didn't show it. No

. . . but they kind of know . . . Ugh! When I think of what they did in Malta to poor old Jim. Yes and to George in Bombay before we started. . . . Those black priests would follow you round the world in circles — year after year till they got the idol's eye . . . etc.

D. Not infrequently, a bit of significant pantomime is enough to direct our expectancy, as, *e. g.*, in "Allison's Lad."

(. . . Winwood takes the dice box, but pauses, anxiously awaiting an answer to Hopton's next question.)

HOPTON: What think you, Captain Boyer? Are they like to admit us speedily to ransom? . . .

(. . . His hand clenches convulsively upon his pipe, which snaps sharply under the pressure. Colonel Drummond enters the room.) . . .

UNDESIRABLE FINGERPOSTS:

A. *Misleading fingerposts, i. e.,* false clues which lead the audience to expect confidently something which will not occur. If such a clue be thrown out to misguide one of the characters, it must be "covered," *i. e.,* its falsity made apparent so that the audience may not be deceived.

"To keep a secret is often no sin; but to tell a lie is a very grave sin indeed. . . . Dishonesty is false preparation and upon that can follow nothing but dissatisfaction for an audience."[12]

B. *Forestalling fingerposts, i. e.,* fingerposts which make the final outcome a foregone conclusion. If, for example, in "Ile," where character traits are used as fingerposts, Captain Keeney, showing no love for his wife, were to appear a thorough-going brute, his character might be considered a forestalling fingerpost.

C. *Unmotivated scenic fingerposts, i.e.,* tricky arrangement of furniture, unusual ornament, etc. They usually prove distracting and make the action seem less probable.

It is, however, necessary at times to introduce some unusual element into the setting, a bell, or a gun, or something of the kind. In such cases two cautions are to be observed: 1st. Let the audience see it long before it is needed. 2d. Quiet their curiosity with a good reason for its being on the stage. An example may be taken from "The Clod."

(. . . and above the towel, a double-barrelled shot gun, suspended on two pegs.) . . .

THADDEUS: *(crosses right, fondly handles his gun)* Golly! I wish I'd see a flock o' birds.

MARY: *(nervously)* I'd rather go without, than hear yuh fire. I wish yuh didn't keep it loaded.

THADDEUS: Yuh know I ain't got time to stop and load when I see the birds. They don' wait for yuh. *(Hangs gun on the wall, drops into a chair . . . etc.)* . . .

Now the satisfied audience turns its attention to the action, and will not be incredulous when the gun is used at the climax.

THE KEYNOTE

The keynote of a play is a fingerpost which is significant of the main theme.

In "Spreading the News," for example, Mrs. Tarpey says: "Business is it? What business would the people be having here, but to be minding one another's business."

And in "Allison's Lad," Colonel Strickland says: "There is no taint of the father in the boy."

4. ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS: WHO? WHERE? AND WHEN?

A. *Who.* The playwright must have his characters called by name for the benefit of the audience. The program does not always suffice. The difficulties at-

tendant on this personal identification are increased by intricate genealogies, elaborate and difficult names and the introduction of unnecessary characters.

See how Tarkington has handled the problem in "Beauty and the Jacobin."

ANNE: *(nervously)* Haven't you finished, Louis?

LOUIS: A dozen! . . . Listen. *(He reads what he has written.)* "Committee of Public Safety. In the name of the Republic. To all officers, Civil and Military. Permit the Citizen Balsage"— that's myself, remember —"and the Citizeness Virginie Balsage, his sister"— that's you, Anne —"and the Citizeness, Marie Balsage, his second sister"— that is Eloise understand . . . etc."

B. *Where.* If the scene is important to the action and not immediately recognizable, the characters must identify it for their audience by their dialogue; *e.g.,* somebody else's kitchen in "Trifles," a deserted inn on a lonely moor, in "A Night at An Inn," an underground temple in "The Queen's Enemies."

In the following example, the whole action takes its rise from the fact that the ship is in the war zone. Notice how this is emphasized in "In the Zone":

DAVIS: . . . What's the use o' blindin' the ports, when that thickhead goes and leaves 'em open?

OLSON: Dey don't see what little light go out yust one port.

SCOTTY: Dinna be a loon, Ollie! D'ye no ken the dangerr o' showin' a licht wi' a pack o' submarrines lyin' aboot?

IVAN: Dot's right, Scotty! I don't like blow up. No, by devil.

SMITTY: I don't think there is much danger of meeting any of their submarines, not until we get into the war zone at any rate.

DAVIS: You don't, eh? *(He lowers his voice and speaks slowly.)* Well we're in the war zone right this minuit if you wants to know. . . .

Such information is unnecessary where the scene is of no particular interest or perfectly obvious. In

"The Clod" a glance tells us that we are in the woman's kitchen. In "The Twelve-pound Look," we may assume that Sir Harry and his wife are home and it doesn't matter in what part of the house we are. In "Nevertheless," "the scene is a room just upstairs," and in "The Romancers," "the scene is laid where you will, provided the costumes are pretty."

C. *When.* The costumes are the principal aids in fixing approximate dates. As the average audience, however, contains a large number of patrons who have only the vaguest idea that lace and velvet were worn "in olden times," if insistence on the period is necessary for the plot, or if within the period some exact date be necessary, the burden once more must fall on the dialogue, *e.g.*, "Allison's Lad."

. . . Go ask them of the scurvy Roundhead who had the stripping of my pockets. . . . The colonel in command of these rebels. . . . Before I gave that promise to your damned usurping Parliament, I swore to serve the King. . . . Will you prattle of law to Cromwell's men? . . . You've not been yet ten hours a prisoner. . . . God, I would it were day! At two in the morning, I've no more courage than . . . etc.

EXERCISE ON THE BEGINNING OF A ONE-ACT-PLAY:

With regard to a play read in class:

1. Did the action start quickly, naturally, with economy of dialogue?
2. Did the playwright spend too much time in setting forth the initial situation and the preceding situations out of which the coming crucial situation has grown?
3. Did he give us the situation adequately? (*i.e.*, did he give us all that ought to be known for an intelligible approach to the crucial moment?)

4. Did he prepare us for what is to come? Did he foreshadow, by veiled hints and suggestions, what is to be the development of the action?
5. Did the playwright introduce for purposes of exposition any characters not essentially connected with the action of the play?
6. Did he use any extraordinary mechanical means for purposes of exposition?
7. Does the action initiate from and end in an enveloping action, like "Beauty and the Jacobin," which is enveloped in the French Revolution?
8. Is the beginning too static — merely expositional? (Remember that the essentials only may be put forward, and that they must be given incidentally, but as significant at this stage of an action now moving close to its crucial point.)
9. Could any improvements be suggested in the matter of emphasis and economy — pantomime for dialogue, a significant word for a sentence, a sentence for a long speech, etc.?
10. Does the beginning present or hint at the theme of the play?
11. Does the beginning create the atmosphere of the play?
12. Do we feel that the beginning presents to us a situation inherently dramatic (not made so by mere clever technique)?
13. Did the playwright take up his story at the right place? (*i.e.*, as near to the point of highest interest as possible, remembering, of course, that we must allow him some preliminary situations to prepare adequately for his crucial moment.)

CHAPTER VI

The Middle of a One-Act-Play

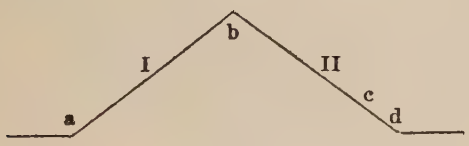
By the middle we understand the body of the play, *i. e.*, all that lies between the incentive moment and the crisis. It is constituted by a series of minor crises through which the major crisis or The Crisis is reached.

A Crisis is the solution of a situation.

A Situation is the result of interaction between character and incident.

Gozzi and Schiller compiled all possible situations and reduced them to thirty-six. By process of varied combination, however, freshness and originality are produced, "as permutations of red and blue and yellow give rise to all the tints of the spectrum." Beside this blending of situations, different atmospheric moods can result in endless novelty. Such moods are likened to the tonal effects of a violin. The violin has only three octaves, but each octave has more than fifty tones.

In the classic full-length drama, especially of yesterday, it was dogmatically set down that "The Complication (I) began at the Incentive Moment (a) and progressed to the Peripeteia (b) where it was succeeded by the Resolution (II) which after developing a Climax (c) was terminated by The Crisis (d)." This was all mapped out nicely with Freytag's open triangle:



In the one-act-play, although many liberties are taken with the old tradition, although we cannot always find a peripeteia or resolution, all these ideas are sometimes found and some of them, the incentive moment, the complication, the crisis and the climax, are always found. Let us, then, consider the middle of a one-act-play as made up of:

Two parts — A: Complication.
B: Resolution.

Four points — 1. Incentive moment.
2. Peripeteia.
3. Crisis.
4. Climax.

THE TWO PARTS.

A. THE COMPLICATION consists of one or more factors which are added to a dramatic situation and make its solution more difficult.[12] Or to express it another way: the accumulation of a number of interrelated and subordinate questions which tend to make the answer to the main question less obvious. The questions are in the mind of the audience — Why did he do that? What is going to be the result? Etc. For example: "A Night at An Inn."

"Retribution at the hands of Klesch" will be the final answer or the solution of the major situation. The main question or major situation is presented by the thieves with their ruby.

The complication is made up of the following situations, each of which may be conceived as giving rise to a question in the mind of the audience:

1. The thieves are on a lonely moor.
2. Discontented, they demand the ruby.
3. Exeunt.

4. They return, frightened.
5. They prepare to receive the priests.
6. They slay them one by one.
7. They plan a celebration.

Each step makes the retribution seem more remote, makes the final answer less obvious. Each step constitutes a minor crisis leading to The Crisis.

For the effective marshaling of these minor crises, the following laws must be kept in mind:

1. THE LAW OF LOGIC: "One crisis must follow another as effect follows cause."

When some circumstance of time or persons tends to separate two crises they must be bridged by:

a) *A link scene, i.e.,* a natural transition from one subject to another, *e.g.,* "Allison's Lad":

Strickland has just finished a confidential talk with Boyer. The next step in the action will be his confidential talk with Winwood. The dicing occupies the attention of the other characters.

STRICKLAND: . . . I'm in no mood for speech.
(Boyer goes back to the table where Winwood in the last minutes has played with notable listlessness and indifference.)

HOPTON: 'Tis your cast, Tom.

WINWOOD: Nay, but I'm done!

GORING: Will you give over?

WINWOOD: But for a moment. My pipe is out. *(Rises and goes over to Strickland.)*

HOPTON: Come, Captain. In good time! Bear a hand with us.
(Boyer sits in Winwood's place at table and dices.)

WINWOOD: You called me, sir?

STRICKLAND: I did not call you, but I was thinking of you . . . etc.

b) *A cover scene, i.e.,* a scene during which the audience must be held while sufficient time elapses to make the next crisis probable, *e.g.,* "A Night at An Inn."—When the seamen go out to sell their ruby, the

Toff takes out his revolver, examines it and lays it on the table. He has scarcely resumed his sporting sheet when they rush in, frightened.

Somewhat more time is required for this excerpt from "Ile."

KEENEY: *(grimly)* Tell 'em to come. I'll see 'em.

JOE: Aye, aye, sir. *(He goes out.)*

KEENEY: *(With a grim smile)* Here it comes, the trouble you spoke of, Mr. Slocum, and we'll make short shift of it. It's better to crush such things at the start than let them make headway.

MATE: *(worriedly)* Shall I wake up the First and Fourth, sir? We might need their help.

KEENEY: No, let them sleep. I'm well able to handle this alone, Mr. Slocum. *(There is the shuffle of footsteps from the outside and five of the crew crowd into the cabin, etc.)*

The playwright must exercise foresight in saving, for these difficult scenes, choice bits of characterization or atmosphere that will sustain the emotion required.

2. THE LAW OF PROGRESSION. "The playwright must advance steadily towards his goal and not run forwards and backwards with uncertainty."

This advance may be direct or indirect.

a) *Direct.* When the minor crisis in question is part of the main action. For example, "The Clod."

MARY: I'd call 'em if I wasn't ——

NORTHERNER: *(leaping to the wall and bracing himself against it)* Go call them in. Save your poor skin and your husband's if you can. Call them in. You can't save yourself. *(Laughs hysterically)* You can't save your miserable skin. 'Cause if they get me and don't shoot you, I WILL!

MARY: *(leaning against the left side of the table for support; in agony)* Oh! . . . etc.

b) *Indirect.* When the minor crisis, though not part of the main action, is used to clarify character

or atmosphere. For example, "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals."

MRS. DOWEY: Kenneth, we could come back by Paris!

KENNETH: All the ladies *(slapping his knees)* like to go to Paris.

MRS. DOWEY: Oh, Kenneth, if just once before I die, I could be fitted for a Paris gown with a dreamy corsage!

KENNETH: You're all alike, old covey. We have a song about it. *(he sings)*

Mrs. Gill is very ill,
Nothing can improve her,
But to see the Tuileries
And waddle through the Louvre.

(No song ever had greater success. Mrs. Dowey is doubled up with mirth. When she comes to:)

MRS. DOWEY: You must learn me that. *(and off she goes in song, also)*

Mrs. Dowey's very ill,
Nothing can improve her . . .

KENNETH: Stop! *(he finishes the verse)*

But dressed up in a Paris gown
To waddle through the Louvre.

(They fling back their heads, she points at him, he points at her . . . etc.)

3. THE LAW OF CONTINUITY. "The end of one crisis must be the beginning of another." No minor crisis should ever come to a dead stop before a blank wall. There should always be a gateway in the wall with a glimpse beyond. The crises should be arranged "like the links in a chain and not like bricks in a row." See, for example, the seven situations outlined on page 80.

B. THE RESOLUTION is the gradual unraveling of the complicating factors which lead up to the solution of the main situation. It is also the answering of the subordinate questions in the minds of the audience leading up to the answer of the main question.

In classic drama the resolution was a long and orderly process, advancing from a clearly discerned peripeteia to the crisis. This is often true of the one-act-play as well.

Examples:

"A Night at An Inn": the resolution runs from "Re-enter Sniggers, terrified" to the end.

"Ile": the resolution runs from "The ice is breakin' up to the no'the'ard," to Annie "commences to laugh hysterically and goes to the organ."

In many one-act-plays, however, built as they are on one situation, each crisis is likely to be solved as it arises.

THE FOUR POINTS.

1. THE INCENTIVE MOMENT is the point at which the complication begins. At the rise of the curtain there is comparative calm. At some point (cf. Beginning: three types) the existing state of affairs is threatened with significant change. "A cloud appears no bigger than a man's hand."[6] The storm is gathering.

For example, "A Night at An Inn": "We're going, you hear? Give us the ruby." "The Twelve-pound Look": "Enter Kate."

2. PERIPETEIA: The turning point, the point that separates the complication from the resolution. What was going well, begins to go ill or *vice versa.*

For example, "Ile": "The ice is breakin' up to the no'the'ard."

"A Night at An Inn": "Re-enter Sniggers, terrified."

In some one-act-plays there is no peripeteia and no formal resolution, *e. g.,* "Spreading the News."

3. Crisis.

Crisis has already been defined as the solution of a situation, or the answer to a question which has arisen in the mind of the audience.

The crisis is the answer to the *Main* question.

It may be seen from this definition that not every crisis is dramatic. Thus, a man may arise, go to the mirror, and inspect his morning chin. We have here a situation; in other words, a character placed in a definite set of circumstances. What is the solution of this situation? What is he going to do about it? Without a moment's hesitation, he is going to take a shave. That is the answer. That is the solution. That shave is a crisis in the technical sense, but it is not dramatic. There has been no struggle.

Suppose, however, that our hero is an Ober-Ammergauer who has been selected by his fellow villagers for the greatest honor in their gift. He is to play the Christus this year and the first performance is only two weeks off. Unhappily, however, he has succumbed to the beauty of a silly American who is summering in the Fernpass. She has nothing but scorn for his flowing beard and has made its immediate removal the one condition attached to her favor. Without it, he can never play the Christus; with it he can never win his love. Under the circumstances, a shave would be more than a crisis; it would be a dramatic crisis.

The Crisis, then, to be dramatic, must develop through minor crises, with a struggle to reveal character. As the central moment of a one-act-play giving rise to the single effect, this crisis illumines all that has gone before. It shows us why the play was written. This, then, is the most important point in the one-act-play, though not necessarily the most emo-

tional. In "Ile," for example, the crisis occurs in the last word spoken.

KEENEY: *(His face suddenly grows hard with determination)* Aye.

This is the solution of the main situation, the answer to the main question, "Will his dominant passion prevail?", or as it exists concretely in the mind of the audience, "Will he turn back?" It is the final triumph of pride, the motivating passion of the action. In this crucial moment "plot, character, theme and atmosphere come to focus and create the single impression."

The event that constitutes the crisis is, in the great majority of cases, enacted upon the stage. Sometimes, however, the "repercussion" may be "far more dramatic than the crisis itself." [6] *E.g.*, "Allison's Lad," and "A Night at An Inn," where the executions take place off stage and still, in a manner, before the audience.

4. CLIMAX.

Since the Incentive Moment, the Peripeteia, and the Crisis concern themselves solely with the logical structure of the plot, there still remains for discussion a fourth point whose aim is to satisfy not the reason, but the feeling of the audience.

In treating of climax, we may consider it first as a single point in the play, which is called The Climax, or, secondly, as a single point in a single situation, which is called A Climax, or, thirdly, as a quality, an emotional effectiveness of arrangement which pervades the entire action and is called simply, Climax.

It should be noted, however, that climax in its most generic aspect is not necessarily dramatic. A succession of graded and terrifying thunder claps would be climactic, but not dramatic. The same could be said of a number of accidental but unrelated misfortunes that might befall a man in the course of his life. Cli-

max, then, does not constitute drama, but unquestionably makes the struggle more effective.

The Climax.

The climax is whatever situation, be it created by word, by action or by atmosphere, will produce in the audience the strongest impression of the play's dominant emotion. In "Ile," for example, this point is found where Keeney becomes convinced of his wife's insanity.

He puts both hands on her shoulders and turns her around so that he can look into her eyes. She stares up at him with a stupid expression, a vague smile on her lips. He stumbles away from her and she commences softly to play the organ again.

A Climax.

The fifth situation of "Ile," wherein Annie succeeds for the moment in conquering Keeney's pride, has a beautifully developed climax of its own.

KEENEY: *(Disturbed)* Go in and rest, Annie. You're all worn out cryin' over what can't be helped.

MRS. KEENEY: *(Suddenly throwing her arms around his neck and clinging to him)* You love me, don't you, David?

KEENEY: *(In amazed embarrassment at this outburst)* Love you? Why d'you ask me such a question, Annie?

MRS. KEENEY: *(Shaking him — fiercely)* But you do, don't you, David? Tell me!

KEENEY: I'm your husband, Annie, and you're my wife. Could there be aught but love between us, after all these years?

MRS. KEENEY: *(Shaking him again — still more fiercely)* Then you do love me. Say it!

KEENEY: *(Simply)* I do, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: *(Gives a sigh of relief — her hands drop to her sides. Keeney regards her anxiously. She passes her hand across her eyes and murmurs half to herself)* I sometimes think if we could only have had a child. *(Keeney turns away from her, deeply moved. She grabs his arm and turns him around to face her — intensely.)* And I've always been a good wife to you, haven't I, David?

KEENEY: *(His voice betraying his emotion)* No man has ever had a better, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: And I've never asked for much from you, have I, David? Have I?

KEENEY: You know you could have all I got the power to give ye, Annie.

MRS. KEENEY: *(Wildly)* Then do this once for my sake, for God's sake — take me home! It's killing me, this life — the brutality and cold and horror of it. I'm going mad. I can feel the threat in the air. I can hear the silence threatening me — day after gray day and every day the same. I can't bear it. *(Sobbing)* I'll go mad, I know I will. Take me home, David, if you love me as you say. I'm afraid. For the love of God, take me home! *(She throws her arms around him, weeping against his shoulder. His face betrays the tremendous struggle going on within him. He holds her out at arm's length, his expression softening. For a moment his shoulders sag, he becomes old, his iron spirit weakens as he looks at her tear-stained face.)*

KEENEY: *(Dragging out the words with an effort)* I'll do it, Annie — for your sake — if you say it's needful for ye, etc.

TENSION AND SUSPENSE.

When we speak of an effective arrangement of events that form a climax, we understand that this effectiveness is to be measured by the tension and, at times, suspense on the part of the audience.

Tension is that continued stretching forward of the mind which should be the characteristic attitude of the audience throughout the play; that wish to "anticipate, but not too successfully;" to know whither, but not exactly how they are to go. It is rather the effect of drama than its essence, and may be defined briefly as: Expectancy plus uncertainty. To insure this tension:

1. All that has gone before must be clear or the audience will be looking backwards instead of forwards.
2. Fingerposts must be skilfully employed.

Once started, this tension should never be wholly relaxed. In ordinary drama, it is true, a dramatic pause is sometimes allowed, *e. g.,* Hamlet to the players; sometimes desired, *e. g.,* the porter scene in "Macbeth." But in a one-act-play the single impression would suffer if the action were really interrupted. This tension, however, should vary in degree, relief following strain, *e. g.,* "A Night at An Inn": the hilarity before the entrance of Klesch.

Suspense is defined as "an acute stage of tension." It is achieved not by interrupting the action, but by delaying the crisis and thus intensifying interest in the central theme.

> Brutus must explain that he thinks it cowardly to kill oneself; the dying Edmund must revoke the command to kill Lear; Friar Laurence may still enter before the moment when Romeo kills himself; Coriolanus may yet be acquitted by the judges; Macbeth is still invulnerable from any man born of woman. Even Richard III receives the news that Richmond's fleet is shattered and dispersed by the storm.[2]

Creating suspense is like keeping the audience or the characters, or both, on the cold side of a stone wall and "nothing is more interesting than a wall behind which something is taking place."

If both audience and characters are ignorant of the outcome, the suspense is said to be "Primary," *e. g.,* "A Night at An Inn."

If the audience foresees the outcome, but feels sympathetically with the characters, who do not, the suspense is said to be "Secondary," *e. g.,* "The Rising of the Moon."

To prolong suspense is to make the solution less obvious and therefore apparently more difficult. This may be effected by:

1. Interposing new obstacles.
2. Explaining old obstacles.

3. Causing new obstacles to arise because of the removal of others.

In "Ile," for example, Keeney is opposed by three obstacles: (1) the opposition of the Mate, (2) the opposition of the crew, (3) the opposition of Annie. The first is in point of time, the new obstacle; the second and third, further explanations of the first. The Mate wants to turn back because, if they do not, he fears that the crew will mutiny and Annie will go mad. The mutiny takes place and is brutally put down, thus removing the second obstacle. But the very conflict which removes the second obstacle, proves the last straw for Annie and brings the third obstacle into prominence.

Caution: A) Suspense should not be too protracted. As in the lyric, sustained rapture will turn to pain, so the acute anxiety of suspense turns to fatigue, with a resultant loss of interest.

B) If suspense is to be interrupted, it must be by something of higher interest than itself.

A Held Situation.

Closely related to climax and suspense is a Held Situation. It is not in any sense a stoppage of the momentum; it is rather taking advantage of all the dramatic value in a situation. It is like squeezing an orange dry.

Its importance is obvious, since the dramatic value of a plot lies partially in the nature of the Climax, partially in the approach to the Climax, and partially in the effective lingering on the Climax. In "Miss Tassy," for instance, the whole force of the play is

found, not in many climactic moments, but in one well held situation.

The secret of a held situation lies in the study of a character reacting to his environment. As a biographer sifts his material and chooses the typical events in the life of his subject, so the dramatist puts before him all that his characters, who are intimately known to him, might do. Then he makes a selection. Upon examination, a new situation is usually found within the chosen situation, and each situation, as it arises, affects each character and each character affects another. It is only after a careful study of this interaction that the dramatist finally asks himself, "What should I do in such circumstances? What would others do? What ought to be done?"[28]

In the following scene, the main situation is revealed after a few lines, when Keeney realizes that Annie is insane. The curtain does not fall, however, until we have tasted every drop of the tragedy. It is an admirably held situation.

MRS. KEENEY: *(Supplicatingly)* David! Aren't you going home?

KEENEY: *(Ignoring the question — commandingly)* You ain't well. Go and lay down a mite. *(He starts for the door.)* I got to git on deck. *(He goes out. She cries after him in anguish.)* David! *(A pause. She passes her hand across her eyes — then commences to laugh hysterically and goes to the organ. She sits down and starts to play wildly an old hymn. Keeney re-enters from the doorway to the deck and stands, looking at her angrily. He comes over and grabs her roughly by the shoulder.)*

KEENEY: Woman, what foolish mockin' is this? *(She laughs wildly and he starts back from her in alarm)* Annie, what is it? *(She doesn't answer him. Keeney's voice trembles)* Don't you know me, Annie? *(He puts both hands on her shoulders and turns her around so that he can look into her eyes. She stares up at him with a stupid expression, a vague smile on her lips. He stumbles away from her, and she commences softly to play the organ again.)*

KEENEY: *(Swallowing hard — in a hoarse whisper, as if he had difficulty in speaking)* You said — you was a-goin' mad — God! *(A long wail is heard from the deck above)* Ah, Bl-o-o-o-ow! *(A moment later the Mate's face appears through the skylight. He can not see Mrs. Keeney.)*

MATE: *(In great excitement)* Whales, sir — a whole school of 'em — off the starb'd quarter 'bout five miles away — big ones!

KEENEY: *(Galvanized into action)* Are you lowerin' the boats?

MATE: Yes, sir.

KEENEY: *(With grim decision)* I'm a-comin' with ye.

MATE: Aye, aye, sir. *(Jubilantly)* You'll get the ile now right enough, sir. *(His head is withdrawn and he can be heard shouting orders.)*

KEENEY: *(Turning to his wife)* Annie! Did you hear him? I'll git the ile. *(She doesn't answer or seem to know he is there. He gives a hard laugh, which is almost a groan.)* I know you're foolin' me, Annie. You ain't out of your mind *(Anxiously)*, be you? I'll git the ile now right enough — jest a little while longer, Annie — then we'll turn hom'ard. I can't turn back now, you see that, don't ye? I've got to git the ile. *(In sudden terror)* Answer me! You ain't mad, be you? *(She keeps on playing the organ, but makes no reply. The Mate's face appears through the skylight.)*

MATE: All ready, sir. *(Keeney turns his back on his wife and strides to the doorway, where he stands for a moment and looks back at her in anguish, fighting to control his feelings.)*

MATE: Comin', sir?

KEENEY: *(His face suddenly grows hard with determination)* Aye. *(He turns abruptly and goes out. Mrs. Keeney does not appear to notice his absence. Her whole attention seems centered in the organ. She sits with half-closed eyes, her body swaying a little from side to side with the rhythm of the hymn. Her fingers move faster and faster and she is playing wildly and discordantly as*

The Curtain Falls.)

DIAGRAMS.

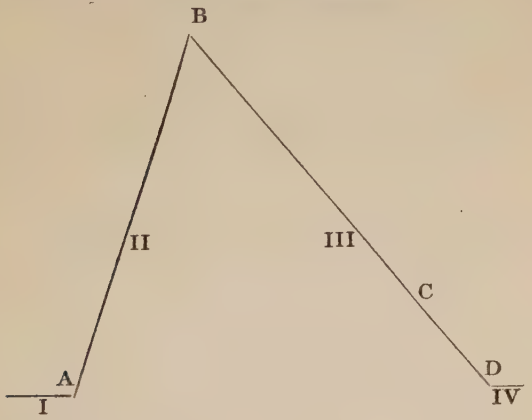
The following diagrams will show how far the one-act-play may depart from the regularity of Freytag's open triangle, which we exemplify in the classic structure of "Macbeth." Note particularly:

I. That the relative length and importance of the four parts is not the same in "Macbeth" and in the one-act-plays.

II. That there is a complete absence of some parts and points in many one-act-plays.

III. That the climax and crisis, though mentally distinct, may be really identified. In other words, that the self-same speech or action may be at once the climax, because it affects the emotions most deeply, and the crisis, because it solves the situation.

1. "Macbeth" (Fifty-nine Pages).



I. Introduction (4 pages).

A. Incentive moment. Act I — Scene 3. "Good Sir, why do you start?"

II. Complication (24 pages).

B. Peripeteia: The escape of Fleance. Act III — Scene 3.

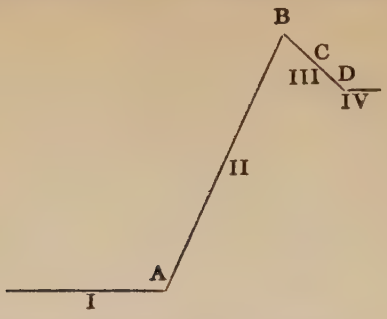
III. Resolution (30 pages).

C. Climax. Act V — Scene 1.

D. Crisis. Act V — Scene 8.

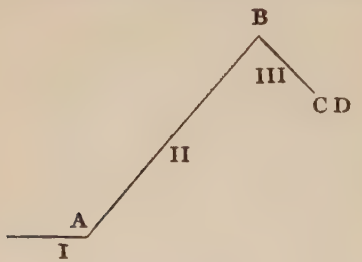
IV. Conclusion (1 page).

2. "Allison's Lad" (Thirty Pages).



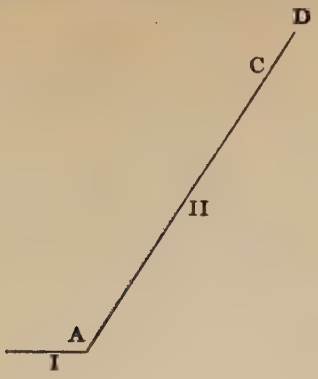
I. Introduction, Deliberate (10 pages).
A. Incentive moment, Winwood: "Drummond!"
II. Complication (15 pages).
B. Peripeteia, Winwood: "You — loved her!"
III. Resolution (3 pages).
C. Climax, Winwood: "You will have news of me, Sir William."
D. Crisis, The report of the muffled volley.
IV. Conclusion (1 page).

3. "A Night at An Inn" (Eleven Pages).



I. Introduction (2½ pages).
A. Incentive moment: "Give us the ruby."
II. Complication (6½ pages).
B. Peripeteia: Re-enter Sniggers, terrified.
III. Resolution (2 pages).
C. Climax, "I did not foresee it."
D. Crisis, "I did not foresee it."

4. "Spreading the News" (Fifteen Pages).



I. Introduction (3 pages).
A. Incentive moment, Jack Smith goes out, leaving his hayfork.
II. Complication (12 pages).
B. No peripeteia.
C. Climax, All together: "It was him that said it."
D. Crisis, Magistrate: "Come on!"

Exercise on the Middle of a One-Act-Play.

With regard to a play read in class:

1. Just where does the movement of the plot begin?
2. State clearly the forces which are in conflict. (Person vs. person? Person vs. outer force, *e. g.*, nature, nemesis?)
   Note carefully in the course of the play the complication and resolution, woven and unraveled by the forces operating in the play,—in each situation, etc.
3. Are these forces working in one of Stevenson's ultimate "passionate cruces of life where duty and inclination come nobly to grapple," or do

we find them working in some relatively minor crisis of life?

4. Has the playwright chosen from the raw material of his story the most significant incidents and situations for his purpose?
5. Segregate each single situation in the play.
6. Are any of these situations weak or useless?
7. Is each situation climactic in itself and worthy of presentation for its element of human interest?
8. Could the sequence of situations be changed to advantage?
9. Do the short, sharp minor crises rise in intensity of emotional pitch?
10. As they proceed, does dialogue become less significant and pantomime become more important in the presentation of situations?
11. Do we feel that the minor crises move too rapidly, pile up too intensely without momentary relief of strain, and does the play, therefore, lack the artistic rhythm gained by movement from strain to relief and again to strain?
12. As the situations succeed one another, do they grow more emotional, shorter, and are they carried more by significant action than by dialogue?
13. Is each minor crisis adequately motivated?
14. Is it generated by an interplay of forces operating in the play, or is it brought about merely by chance, or by mechanical means?
15. Is each minor crisis motivating? (Does situation "a" somehow determine situation "b", etc.?)
16. In the preparation of each situation and especially for the major crisis, did the playwright

prepare us too fully and so allow interest to lag?

17. Did he prepare us too little for his crisis — give it to us too precipitately and so stun and oversurprise us?
18. Does he achieve suspense in each minor crisis and in the major crisis?
19. Point out in each situation the elements that made for suspense — hints in dialogue, pantomime, etc.
20. Is this a good definition: "Crisis is the point of time at which any affair comes to the highest"?
21. Note the "fingerposts."
22. Is there any notable irony in the situations?
23. Is there any notable contrast in the situations?
24. Is there any notable artistry in working up the emotional intensity and significance of situations? (The porter scene and the knocking at the gate in "Macbeth.")
25. Was the stage business, called forth by incidents and situations, effective? (Novelty, significance, relief, etc.)
26. Why would Stevenson's "Markheim" be unsuitable for dramatization?

CHAPTER VII

The End of a One-Act-Play

There are many reasons for saying that the end is the most difficult part of a one-act-play. In the first place, any crisis, even in life, is more apt to have a definite beginning than a definite end. That is to say, the causes of a crisis are more easily reckoned than its effects. Consider, for instance, the crisis that was reached when Martin Luther nailed his theses to the door of the cathedral. It is an easy matter to begin the story, to tell what led to his step and to describe the step itself, but it is impossible to calculate the consequences. Again, many crises, which may come to a definite end, do not conclude satisfactorily or dramatically. To end the play so that the truth is satisfied, art is satisfied and the audience is satisfied requires an uncommon amount of skill.

The End is Difficult

Another difficulty lies in determining where the play should end. "Drama ends exactly where resistance ends."[5] The logical place for the curtain would be, then, at the crisis or the answer to the main question. But the play cannot always end with the drama. During the complication, it often happens that secondary questions have arisen which must be solved and yet cannot be solved until the main question itself has been answered. We might state, as a general principle, that "the curtain should not be lowered with the characters in an attitude which cannot last, but which must be followed

Where the Play Ends

by an important development."[6] For instance, it is quite probable that the answer to the main question, in a given romantic situation, would be the parting words of the heroine, "I shall be yours and yours alone! If not in life . . . then eternally in death!" Tremendous! But if, just as the curtain falls, the hero rushes off, sword in hand, to meet a well-built villain, we cannot help wondering all the way home just how near the heroine came to widow's weeds. In some plays all our questions are answered at the crisis and in some plays they are not. There are, then, two types of endings:

1. Direct Crisis, wherein the play ends with the crisis; *e. g.*, "A Night at An Inn."

In this play the crisis must answer the main question, "Will the Toff's cleverness be triumphant?" We do not know with certainty, until the last line of the play, when, in obedience to the voice of the terrible idol, he goes to his death.

Voice: Meestaire Albert Thomas, Able Seaman.

Albert: Must I go, Toffy? Toffy, must I go? . . . *(Exit.)*

Voice: Meestaire Jacob Smith, Able Seaman.

Sniggers: I can't go, Toffy. I can't go. I can't do it. *(He goes.)*

Voice: Meestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman.

The Toff: I did not foresee it. *(Exit.)* (The Crisis.)

(Curtain)

2. Indirect Crisis, wherein the crisis is followed by:

a) *An interpretative comment*, which explains the meaning of the play; *e. g.*, "The Gaol Gate." The crisis has already occurred.

Mary Cahel: *(Holding out her hands)* Are there any people in the streets at all till I call on them to come hither? Did they

ever hear in Galway such a thing to be done, a man to die for his neighbor. Tell it out in the streets for the people to hear, Dennis Cahel from Slieve-Echtge is dead. It was Dennis Cahel from Slieve-Caol that died in the place of his neighbor. . . . One word to the judge and Dennis was free. They offered him all sorts of riches. They brought him drink in the gaol, and gold, to swear away the life of his neighbor! . . . I will go through Gort and Kilbecanty and Druimdarod and Daroda; I will call to the people and the singers at the fairs to make a great praise for Dennis! . . .

I to stoop on a stick through half a hundred years, I will never be tired with praising! Come hither, Mary Cushin, till we'll shout it through the roads, Dennis Cahel died for his neighbor!

(She goes off to the left, Mary Cushin following her.)

(Curtain.)

b) *A significant aftermath,* which shows the necessary events that happen after the crisis; *e. g.,* "Allison's Lad."

(A moment's pause, and then from below in the rainy courtyard is heard the report of a muffled volley.) (The Crisis.)

HOPTON: Hark!

STRICKLAND: *(in an altered voice)* Well done!

GORING: Grant that he made a clean ending!

STRICKLAND: *(turns slowly with eyes fixed before him, and the sudden smile of one who greets a friend)* Tom! Well done, Allison's lad! *(Pitches forward.)*

GORING: *(catching Strickland in his arms)* Sir William! Help here, Frank! *(They place Strickland in his chair. Goring starts to loosen his neckgear. Hopton kneels and lays his hand on Strickland's heart. On the moment, Boyer comes swiftly into the room.)*

BOYER: Will! Will! The lad died gallantly. He went as if a strong arm were around him.

HOPTON: *(Lets fall the hand he has laid on Strickland's heart. Speaks in an awe-struck voice.)* Perhaps there was!

GORING: *(Rises erect from bending over Strickland)* Captain! Sir William —

(Boyer catches the note in Goring's voice, and removes his hat, as he stands looking upon what he now knows to be the dead body of his friend and leader.)

(Curtain.)

Anti-Climax

For many plays, an indirect crisis is the only ending. Without it they would have "the air of a hexameter line with the spondee cut off." It is this kind of conclusion, this rapid gathering together of hanging threads that offers the problem. Unless skilfully handled, it is likely to result in anti-climax. That is to say, the most effective moment in the play, where the Climax should be found, is likely to be occupied by action of minor emotional importance. See, for example, "The Boy Comes Home," by A. A. Milne.

Anti-climax, though a defect, is to be preferred to an end that is distorted in order to achieve emphasis. In an older day there was such a dread of anti-climax and such a passion for "a curtain" that, whether probable or not, their comedies ended with marriages all around and their tragedies with as much death as possible. These solutions were often added after the solution of the real central difficulty and might be called "Super crises."

Avoiding Anti-climax

The indirect crisis may, however, possess emphasis without the introduction of impossible super crises. This may be accomplished by:

1. *A striking bit of characterization, e. g.,* "The Clod."

NORTHERNER: *(with great fervor)* I'm ashamed of what I said. The whole country will hear of this, and you. *(He takes her hand and presses it to his lips; then he turns and hurries out of the house.)*

MARY: *(in dead, flat tone)* I'll have to drink out of the tin cup now. *(The hoofbeats of the Northerner's horse are heard.)*

(Curtain.)

REGIS COLLEGE S. J. LIBRARY DENVER COLO.

2. *By stressing emotional atmosphere* as they do in music, when a few chords are to be played after the song is ended; *e. g.,* "Riders to the Sea" closes with the calm of eternity.

NORA: *(in a whisper to Cathleen)* She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned, you could hear her crying out from here to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael and would anyone have thought that?

CATHLEEN: *(slowly and clearly)* An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA: *(puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on Bartley's feet)* They're all together this time and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and on Stephen and Shawn *(bending her head);* and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of everyone is left living in the world. *(She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away. Continuing):* Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied. *(She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly.)*

3. *By a return to a former situation,* now seen in a new light; *e. g.,* "The Workhouse Ward." The play opened with a quarrel, the crisis we have touched upon and now, "Mrs. Donahoe" goes out. The old men lie down and are silent for a moment.

MICHAEL MISKELL: Maybe the house is not so wide as what she says.

MIKE MCINERNEY: Why wouldn't it be wide?

MICHAEL MISKELL: Ah, there does be a good deal of middling poor houses down by the sea.

MIKE MCINERNEY: What would you know about wide houses? Whatever sort of a house you had yourself, it was too wide for the provisions you had into it.

MICHAEL MISKELL: Whatever provision I had in my house, it was wholesome provision and natural provision. Herself and her periwinkles! Periwinkles is a hungry sort of food.

MIKE MCINERNEY: Stop your impudence and your chat or it will be the worse for you. . . .

MICHAEL MISKELL: I would never ask at all to go eating periwinkles. . . . I'm afraid I might swallow the pin.

MIKE MCINERNEY: Who in the world wide is asking you to eat them? You're as tricky as a fish in full tide.

MICHAEL MISKELL: Tricky is it? Oh, my curse and the curse of the four and twenty men upon you! . . . etc.
(The scene ends in a violent quarrel.)

EXERCISE ON THE END OF A ONE-ACT-PLAY.

With regard to a play read in class:

1. Is the ending in Dialogue? In Pantomime? In both? Is it too long? Too short? Dramatic? Satisfying? What happened after the curtain?
2. Is the play satisfying? Why? Is it because of the author? The theme? The technique? Our likes and dislikes? The setting? Does it rouse our emotions? Does it uplift? Is it stupidly and falsely cheering because it rests on untrue happiness? Does it depress? Is it good to realize or merely uselessly unpleasant?
3. Is the end of this play (the brief scene after decisive action) psychologically sound, *i. e.,* in character; artistically sound, *i. e.,* fitting with the texture of the beginning and middle?
4. Would it have been better to telescope the end with the crucial moment?
5. Is the pantomime here really and intensely effective?
6. Is the dialogue worthy of its emphatic place in the play?

7. Is there about this situation a feeling of significant finality?

   Clue: What is at stake?

   a) A change or impending change of character?

   b) A re-emphasizing of a tendency in a character or of a state of affairs in the relation between characters, which was, in the course of the play, being undermined and threatened with extinction?

   c) Does it reveal the unsuspected?

   d) Does it merely present a thrilling situation, thrillingly experienced (mere plot play)?

   e) Does it merely present a problem vividly and in a thought-provoking way?

   f) Does it solve a problem?

8. Do we see this crucial moment? (The mistake has been made of narrating it as having taken place off stage).

9. Has the crucial moment been presented with a maximum of action and a minimum of dialogue?

PART THREE

THE ANALYSIS OF A ONE-ACT-PLAY

PART THREE

THE ANALYSIS OF THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

"The Rising of the Moon" Analyzed

Preliminary Notes

The Dramatic Element.

The struggle of the sergeant when he tries to keep the ragged man off the quay and later when he tries to keep him on it, are only externalizations of the greater struggle that is taking place in his own soul. There his real Irish self, loyal to old Granuaile, is struggling with his official self; his heart, with his "belt and tunic." On the one side, promotion, a hundred pounds, and the associations of years; on the other, his country, suddenly made concrete in the ragged man. Behind the sergeant looms the centuries' old struggle of a conquering and an unconquered race, and behind that again, the world-old struggle of right against might.

The Characterization.

It should be clear, from what has just been said, that although the ragged man has the more attractive part, the sergeant is the real protagonist of the play. His is the heart that furnishes the battleground. The ragged man is only the occasion that brings the drama to light. We have, then, a right to expect that one will be more minutely characterized than the other,

though in neither case do we look for superfluous development.

How many qualities, now, does the action demand in the ragged man? Only one. He must have a profound knowledge of human nature. With that the plot can be solved. And so it is. His humor and resourcefulness are only aspects of his knowledge. What do we know of his moral qualities? Can we say he is noble, cruel, ambitious, affectionate or anything else? From his entrance to his exit, he is playing on the sergeant. He is acting a part throughout, and even the final speech, which comes from his heart, reveals nothing but the fact that Lady Gregory has a sense of theatrical values.

The sergeant, on the other hand, is very completely etched for us, though, of course, the process is a gradual one. When we see him first, he is, like most of us here below, wrapped in a double disguise. Besides being himself, he is an officer and a husband. As his fellow policemen see him, he is human, and just a bit timid, ambitious, acquisitive, pompous and pleased with his own sagacity. His wife knows all this a little better than the policemen and she could probably tell them, in addition, that he is a simple, credulous, good husband with an ear for a tune — sentimental, in fact. But even his wife would be surprised to learn that buried deep in the man she has lived with for years is the lover of Granuaile, ready to give up reward and promotion for an almost hopeless ideal. How, indeed, could she guess it when the sergeant did not know it himself? That was left for the ragged man to discover. And the skill with which this perfect stranger explores the depths of a heart that its owner had never plumbed is perhaps the finest thing in the play.

Note that, in spite of its apparent complexity, not a single element of the character is unnecessary to the

action. Note furthermore that, in accordance with the principle of proportion, the sergeant's warm, human sentimentality and latent patriotism are more frequently and tellingly stressed than any of his subordinate or contrary qualities.

The Tension and Suspense.

The tension and suspense of the play arise in connection with these four questions which the audience, at various times, is trying to solve, "but not too successfully."

1. Who is the ragged man?
2. Will the fugitive win the sergeant?
3. Will the fugitive escape?
4. What will be the sergeant's reaction to his own sacrifice?

We shall refer, in the course of our analysis, to the tension resulting in each case, as T. 1., T. 2., T. 3., T. 4., and to the suspense which occurs in connection with each, as S. 1., S. 2., S. 3., S. 4.

The Subject and Theme.

The subject of the play is "Duty." The theme concerns itself with the conflict of duties and might be expressed in the words of the old adage, "Blood is thicker than water."

"THE RISING OF THE MOON"

By

Lady Gregory

Persons:

Sergeant.
Policeman X.
Policeman B.
A Ragged Man.

Scene: Side of a quay in a seaport town. Some posts and chains. A large barrel. Enter three policemen. Moonlight.

The setting is simple with nothing to distract the audience, so the dialogue may begin immediately. "Moonlight" answers *the question "When?"*

(Sergeant, who is older than the others, crosses the stage to right and looks down steps. The others put down a paste pot and unroll a bundle of placards.)

Fingerposts. The audience is curious at once, about the steps and the notice.

POLICEMAN B: I think this would be a good place to put up a notice. *(He points to barrel.)*

First Situation: Three policemen reach a spot where it is highly probable a fugitive will come who has a great price on his head.

POLICEMAN X: Better ask him. *(Calls to Sergeant.)* Will this be a good place for a placard? *(No answer.)*

Note the proportion in *Characterization.* From the start the two ordinary policemen are "flattened." They are only uniforms. B might be X and X might be B.

POLICEMAN B: Will we put up a notice here on the barrel? *(No answer.)*

SERGEANT: There's a flight of steps here that leads to the water. This is a place that should be minded well.

The question "Where?" is answered.

The question "Who?" is answered by the sergeant's uniform and tone of authority.

THE EXPOSITION BEGINS. It is intrinsic, interesting and natural.

If he got down here, his friends might have a boat to meet him; they might send it in here from outside.

Planting for the crisis.

T.3. begins. It is primary.

1st Fact in the Exposition: Some one is trying to escape. We receive a *definite impression* of subdued excitement which runs through the entire play and is brought to focus at the Crucial Moment.

(They paste the notice up.)

SERGEANT: *(Reading it.)* Dark hair, dark eyes, smooth face, height five feet five — there's not much to take hold of in that. It's a pity I had no chance of seeing him before he broke out of gaol. They say he's a wonder, that he makes all the plans for the whole organization. There isn't another man in Ireland would have broken gaol the way he did. He must have some friends among the gaolers.

Characterization by description.

POLICEMAN B: A hundred pounds is little enough for the Government to offer for him. You may be sure any man in the force that takes him will get promotion.

2d Fact in the Exposition: The sergeant has never seen the fugitive. This is also *Planting* for future developments.
3d Fact in the Exposition: The fugitive is a remarkable little man who has broken gaol.

4th Fact in the Exposition: One hundred pounds and promotion for the man who captures the fugitive.

SERGEANT: I'll mind this place myself. I wouldn't wonder at all if he came this way. He might come slipping along there *(points to side of quay)*, and his friends might be waiting for him there *(points down steps)*, and once he got away it's little chance we'd have of finding him; it's maybe under a load of kelp he'd be in a fishing boat, and not one to help a married man that wants it to the reward.

Character trait: Acquisitiveness.

Planting for the entrance of the fugitive. When the "Ragged Man" appears the audience will be pleasantly suspicious and anxious to have its suspicions verified.

POLICEMAN X: And if we get him itself, nothing but abuse on our heads for it from the people, and maybe from our own relations.

Character trait: Though acquisitive, the sergeant is no Shylock.
First hint of the *Theme.*

SERGEANT: Well, we have to do our duty in the force. Haven't we the whole country depending on us to keep law and order? It's those that are down

The sergeant sets forth a part of the first motive in the coming struggle. The reason behind it is none too appealing.

would be up and those that are up would be down, if it wasn't for us. Well, hurry on, you have plenty of other places to placard yet, and come back here then to me. You can take the lantern. Don't be too long now. It's very lonesome here with nothing but the moon.

Exit of policemen is motivated.

Character trait: Timidity.

POLICEMAN B: It's a pity we can't stop with you. The Government should have brought more police into the town with *him* in gaol, and at assize time, too. Well, good luck to your watch. *(They go out.)*

Crisis of the first situation: The sergeant keeps watch alone. It is not a dramatic crisis.

SERGEANT: *(Walks up and down once or twice and looks at placard.)* A hundred pounds and promotion sure. There must be a great deal of spending in a hundred pounds. It's a pity some honest man not to be the better of that.

Cover scene.
The sergeant emphasizes the first motive.

(A ragged man appears at left and tries to slip past. Sergeant suddenly turns.)

INCENTIVE MOMENT.
Characterization, by Entrance.
T.1. begins. It is primary.

SERGEANT: Where are you going?

MAN: I'm a poor ballad-singer, your honour. I thought to sell some of these *(holds out bundle of ballads)* to the sailors. *(He goes on.)*

2d Situation: The ragged man tries to reach the water's edge. He is opposed by the sergeant.
His first plan is to brazen it through, with just a touch of pathos.

SERGEANT: Stop! didn't I tell you to stop? You can't go on there.

MAN: Oh, very well. It's a hard thing to be poor. All the world's against the poor!

SERGEANT: Who are you?

The first distant indication of internal struggle: the sergeant's interest in the ragged man.

MAN: You'd be as wise as myself if I told you, but I don't mind. I'm one Jimmy Walsh, a ballad-singer.

SERGEANT: J i m m y Walsh? I don't know that name.

MAN: Ah, sure, they know it well enough in Ennis. Were you ever in Ennis, sergeant?

SERGEANT: What brought y o u here?

MAN: Sure, it's to the assizes I came, thinking I might make a few shillings here or there. It's in the one train with the judges I came.

SERGEANT: Well, if you came so far, you may as well go farther, for you'll walk out of this.

The sergeant remembers his "belt and tunic."

MAN: I will, I will; I'll just go on where I was going. *(Goes towards steps.)*

SERGEANT: Come back from those steps; no one has leave to pass down them to-night.

MAN: I'll just sit on the top of the steps till I see will some sailor buy a ballad off me that would give me my supper. They do be late going back to the ship. It's often I saw them in Cork carried down the quay in a hand-cart.

SERGEANT: Move on, I tell you. I won't have anyone lingering about the quay to-night.

MAN: Well, I'll go. It's the poor have the hard life! Maybe yourself might l i k e one, sergeant. Here's a good sheet now. *(Turns one over.)* "Content and a Pipe" — that's not much. "The Peeler and the Goat"— you wouldn't like that. "Johnny Hart"— that's a lovely song.

The man's second plan is to put the sergeant in good humor.

SERGEANT: Move on.

MAN: Ah, wait till you hear it. *(Sings:)*

Indirect Progress.

There was a rich farmer's daughter lived near the town of Ross;
She courted a Highland soldier, his name was Johnny Hart;
Says the mother to her daughter, "I'll go distracted mad
If you marry that Highland soldier dressed up in Highland plaid."

Character trait: The sergeant allows him to finish. A fact not unnoticed by the ragged man.

SERGEANT: Stop that noise.

(Man wraps up his ballads and shuffles towards the steps.)

SERGEANT: Where are you going?

MAN: Sure you told me to be going, and I am going.

SERGEANT: Don't be a fool. I didn't tell you to go that way; I told you to go back to the town.

MAN: Back to the town, is it?

SERGEANT: *(Taking him by the shoulder and shoving him before him.)* Here, I'll show you the way. Be off with you. What are you stopping for?

Crisis of 2d Situation: The ragged man does not reach the water's edge.

MAN: *(Who has been keeping his eye on the notice, points to it.)* I think I know what you're waiting for, sergeant.

3d Situation: The ragged man tries to remain on the quay until his friends can arrive.

His new plan is to play on the sergeant's curiosity and timidity and thus make his company more welcome.

SERGEANT: What's that to you?

MAN: And I know well the man you're waiting for—I know him well — I'll be going.

(He shuffles on.)

SERGEANT: You know him? Come back here. What sort is he?

MAN: Come back is it, sergeant? Do you want to have me killed?

SERGEANT: Why do you say that?

MAN: Never mind. I'm going. I wouldn't be in your shoes if the

reward was ten times as much. *(Goes on off stage to left).* Not if it was ten times as much.

SERGEANT: *(Rushing after him.)* Come back here, come back. *(Drags him back.)* What sort is he? Where did you see him?

Characterization by stage business.

MAN: I saw him in my own place, in the County Clare. I tell you you wouldn't like to be looking at him. You'd be afraid to be in the one place with him. There isn't a weapon he doesn't know the use of, and as to strength, his muscles are as hard as that board *(slaps barrel).*

Note the Climactic order:

"A brute of a man . . .

SERGEANT: Is he as bad as that?

MAN: He is then.

SERGEANT: Do you tell me so?

MAN: There was a poor man in our place, a sergeant from Ballyvaughan. It was with a lump of stone he did it.

. . . did away with a sergeant.

SERGEANT: I never heard of that.

MAN: And you wouldn't, sergeant. It's not everything that happens that gets into the papers. And there was a policeman in plain clothes, too. . . . It is in Limerick he was. . . . It was after the time of the attack on the police barrack at Kilmallock. . . . Moonlight . . . just like this . . . waterside. . . . Nothing was known for certain.

. . . Moonlight and waterside . . .

SERGEANT: Do you say so? It's a terrible county to belong to.

MAN: That's so, indeed! You might be standing there, looking out that way, thinking you saw him coming up this side of the quay *(points),* and he might be coming up this other side

. . . and you may be the next."

(points), and he'd be on you before you knew where you were.

SERGEANT: It's a whole troop of police they ought to put here to stop a man like that.

MAN: But if you'd like me to stop with you, I could be looking down this side. I could be sitting up here on this barrel.

SERGEANT: And you know him well, too?

A feeble effort to hide his fear.

MAN: I'd know him a mile off, sergeant.

SERGEANT: But y o u wouldn't want to share the reward?

Fine contrast and emphasis.

MAN: Is it a poor man like me, that has to be going the roads and singing in fairs, to have the name on him that he took a reward? But you don't want me. I'll be safer in the town.

SERGEANT: Well, you can stop.

Crisis of 3d Situation: The ragged man remains on the quay.

MAN: *(Getting up on barrel.)* All right, sergeant. I wonder, now, you're not tired out, sergeant, walking up and down the way you are.

4th Situation: The ragged man sets out to win the sergeant. He has learned that the sergeant is a human sort — Irish, with an ear for a tune and no hatred for the cause. But that he is full of the pride of place. Promotion and £100 loom large. The ragged man must reach down deep to touch the patriot who, he suspects, lies hidden under the wrappings of years.

SERGEANT: If I'm tired I'm used to it.

MAN: You might have hard work before you to-night yet. Take it easy while you can. There's plenty of room up here on the barrel, and you see f a r t h e r when you're higher up.

SERGEANT: Maybe so. *(Gets up beside him on barrel, facing right. They sit back to back, looking different ways.)* You made me feel a bit queer with the way you talked.

MAN: Give me a match, sergeant *(He gives it and man lights pipe);* take a draw yourself? It'll quiet you. Wait now till I give you a light, but you needn't turn round. Don't take your eye off the quay for the life of you.

The audience is sure from the expression revealed by the light of the match, that the ragged man is the fugitive named in the notice. From here on, T.1. is no longer primary, but secondary tension. T.3.

SERGEANT: Never fear, I won't. *(Lights pipe. They both smoke.)* Indeed it's a hard thing to be in the force, out at night and no thanks for it, for all the danger we're in. And it's little we get but abuse from the people, and no choice but to obey our orders, and never asked when a man is sent into danger, if you are a married man with a family.

Character revelation which leads the ragged man to sound the sergeant still further with the following song.

MAN: *(Sings)*—

As through the hills I walked to view the hills and shamrock plain,
I stood awhile where nature smiles to view the rocks and streams,
On a matron fair I fixed my eyes beneath a fertile vale,
As she sang her song it was on the wrong of poor old Granuaile.

Direct Progress. Contrast with "Johnny Hart." T.2.

SERGEANT: Stop that; that's no song to be singing in these times.

MAN: Ah, sergeant, I was only singing to keep my heart up. It sinks when I think of him. To think of us two sitting here, and he creeping up the quay, maybe, to get to us.

The ragged man helps the sergeant to forget his uniform and strengthens the bond between them.

SERGEANT: Are you keeping a good lookout?

MAN: I am; and for no reward, too. Amn't I the foolish man? But when I saw a man in trouble, I never could help trying to get him out of it. What's that? Did something hit me? *(Rubs his heart.)*

A little shot on the side.

No, but something has hit the sergeant's heart.

SERGEANT: *(Patting him on the shoulder.)* You will get your reward in heaven.

MAN: I know that, I know that sergeant, but life is precious.

SERGEANT: Well, you can sing if it gives you more courage.

Even "Granuaile." *Character revelation. Planting* for the crisis.

PERIPETEIA.

MAN: *(Sings)*—

Her head was bare, her hands and feet with iron bands were bound,
Her pensive strain and plaintive wail mingles with the evening gale,
And the song she sang with mournful air, I am old Granuaile.
Her lips so sweet that monarchs kissed. . . .

Note the climactic order of the songs in the play. Each one is more dramatic than the last.

SERGEANT: That's not it . . . "Her gown she wore was stained with gore." . . . That's it — you missed that.

Character revelation. Planting for the crisis.

MAN: You're right, sergeant, so it is; I missed it. *(Repeats line.)* But to think of a man like you knowing a song like that.

Contrast of the two leading motives sharply focused.

SERGEANT: There's many a thing a man might know and might not have any wish for.

MAN: Now, I dare say, sergeant, in your youth, you used to be sitting up on a wall, the way

Intrinsic and very effective exposition.

you are sitting up on this barrel now, and the other lads beside you, and you s i n g i n g "Granuaile"? . . .

SERGEANT: I did then.

MAN: And the "Shan Bhean Bhocht"? . . .

SERGEANT: I did then.

MAN: A n d the "Green on the Cape"?

SERGEANT: That was one of them.

MAN: And maybe the man you are watching for to-night used to be sitting on the wall, when he was young, and singing those same songs. . . . it's a queer world. . . .

Skilfully bringing the 2d Principal motive to bear on the present situation.

SERGEANT: Whisht! . . . I think I see something coming. . . . It's only a dog.

But the sergeant is not yet won. He is still easily distracted.

MAN: And isn't it a queer world? . . . Maybe it's one of the boys you used to be singing with that time you will be arresting to-day or to-morrow, and sending into the dock. . . .

SERGEANT: That's true indeed.

MAN: And maybe one night, after you had been singing, if the other boys had told you some plan they had, some plan to free the country, you might have joined with them . . . and maybe it is you might be in trouble now.

Note how the man's boldness rises to a climax:

1. You *might* have joined.
2. It's with the people you *were*.
3. Even now you are not against them.
4. You *will* be with them yet.
5. You *are* with them.

SERGEANT: Well, who knows but I might? I had a great spirit in those days.

The sergeant lends a hand at strengthening his own second motive.

MAN: It's a queer world, sergeant, and it's little any mother knows when she sees her child

creeping on the floor what might happen to it before it has gone through its life, or who will be who in the end.

SERGEANT: That's a queer thought now, and a true thought. Wait now till I think it out. . . . If it wasn't for the sense I have, and for my wife and family, and for me joining the force the time I did, it might be myself now would be after breaking gaol and hiding in the dark, and it might be him that's hiding in the dark and that got out of gaol would be sitting up where I am on this barrel. . . And it might be myself would be creeping up trying to make my escape from himself, and it might be himself would be keeping the law, and myself would be breaking it, and myself would be trying maybe to put a bullet in his head, or to take up a lump of stone the way you said he did . . . no, that myself did . . . Oh! *(Gasps. After a pause.)* What's that? *(Grasps man's arm.)*

Although common sense, family interest and his uniform are all on one side — he is beginning to realize vaguely that Granuaile is on the other.

S.3.

MAN: *(Jumps off barrel and listens out over water.)* It's nothing, sergeant.

SERGEANT: I thought it might be a boat. I had a notion there might be friends of his coming about the quays with a boat.

Planting for the Crisis.

MAN: Sergeant, I am thinking it was with the people you were, and not with the law you were, when you were a young man.

SERGEANT: Well, if I was foolish then, that time's gone.

MAN: Maybe, sergeant, it comes into your head sometimes, in spite of your belt and your tunic, that it might have been as well for you to have followed Granuaile.

The Theme of the whole play.

SERGEANT: It's no business of yours what I think.

MAN: Maybe, sergeant, you'll be on the side of the country yet.

SERGEANT: *(Gets off barrel.)* Don't talk to me like that. I have my duties and I know them. . . . *(Looks round.)* That was a boat; I hear the oars. *(Goes to the steps and looks down.)*

The sergeant does not arrest the man or even deny what he says.
S.2., S.3.

MAN: *(Sings)*—

O, then, tell me, Shawn O'Farrell,
Where the gathering is to be.
In the old spot by the river
Right well known to you and me!

SERGEANT: Stop that! Stop that, I tell you!

MAN: *(Sings louder)*—

One word more for signal token,
Whistle up the marching tune,
With your pike upon your shoulder,
At the Rising of the Moon.

The Climax of the Songs.

SERGEANT: If you don't stop that, I'll arrest you.

(A whistle from below answers, repeating the air.)

SERGEANT: That's a signal. *(Stands between him and steps.)* You must not pass this way. . . . Step farther back. . . . Who are you? You are no ballad-singer.

S.1. Secondary.

MAN: You needn't ask who I am; that placard will tell you. *(Points to placard.)*

T.1. ceases to be even secondary.

SERGEANT: You are the man I am looking for.

MAN: (Takes off hat and wig. *Sergeant seizes them.)* I am. There's a hundred pounds on my head. There is a friend of mine below in a boat. He knows a safe place to bring me to.

SERGEANT: *(Looking still at hat and wig.)* It's a pity! It's a pity. You deceived me. You deceived me well.

MAN: I am a friend of Granuaile. There is a hundred pounds on my head.

The Motives are reduced to their simplest terms and sharply contrasted.

SERGEANT: It's a pity, it's a pity!

MAN: Will you let me pass, or must I make you let me?

SERGEANT: I am in the force. I will not let you pass.

S.2.

MAN: I thought to do it with my tongue. *(Puts hand in breast.)* What is that? *(Voice of Policeman X outside:)* Here, this is where we left him.

5th Situation: The policemen return.

S.3.

SERGEANT: It's my comrades coming.

MAN: You won't betray me . . . the friend of Granuaile. *(Slips behind barrel.) (Voice of Policeman B:)* That was the last of the placards.

POLICEMAN X: *(As they come in.)* If he makes his escape it won't be unknown he'll make it.

(Sergeant puts hat and wig behind his back.)

POLICEMAN B: Did anyone come this way?

S.2.

SERGEANT: *(After a pause.)* No one.

Crisis of the 4th Situation. THE CRISIS of the play.

POLICEMAN B: No one at all?

SERGEANT: No one at all.

POLICEMAN B: We had no orders to go back to the station; we can stop along with you.

SERGEANT: I don't want you. There is nothing for you to do here.

POLICEMAN B: You bade us to come back here and keep watch with you.

SERGEANT: I'd sooner be alone. Would any man come this way and you making all that talk? It is better the place to be quiet.

POLICEMAN B: Well, we'll leave you the lantern anyhow.
(Hands it to him.)

SERGEANT: I don't want it. Bring it with you.

POLICEMAN B: You might want it. There are clouds coming up and you have the darkness of the night before you yet. I'll leave it over here on the barrel.
(Goes to barrel.)

SERGEANT: Bring it with you, I tell you. No more talk.

POLICEMAN B: Well I thought it might be a comfort to you. I often think when I have it in my hand and can be flashing it about into every dark corner *(doing so)* that it's the same as being beside the fire at home, and the bits of bogwood blazing up now and again.
(Flashes it about, now on the barrel, now on the Sergeant.)

THE CLIMAX of the play. Character, theme, plot and atmosphere are brought to a point in these two words. T.2. ceases.
Held Situation.
New obstacle. S.3.
Fine Character Touch: Had the sergeant been left alone with the ragged man he would have died rather than let him escape. But now it is three to one. His second motive made concrete is a brave, but helpless fugitive. His first motive made concrete is the pair of nosey and irritating policemen. It is they who force him to shield the ragged man.

S.3.

S.3.

SERGEANT: *(Furious.)* Be off the two of you, yourselves and your lantern!

(They go out. Man comes from behind barrel. He and Sergeant stand looking at one another.)

T.3. ceases.

Crisis of 5th Situation.

6th Situation: The sergeant faces the accomplished fact.

T.4.

SERGEANT: What are you waiting for?

MAN: For my hat, of course, and my wig. You wouldn't wish me to get my death of cold?

(Sergeant gives them.)

ENDING: *An Indirect Crisis.* Significant aftermath.

MAN: *(Going towards steps.)* Well, goodnight, comrade, and thank you. You did me a good turn to-night and I'm much obliged to you. Maybe I'll be able to do as much for you when the small rise up and the big fall down . . . when we all change places at the Rising *(waves his hand and disappears)* of the Moon.

This little flourish helps to sustain the emotional tone, but it is the sergeant's last remark that saves the play from anti-climax.

SERGEANT: *(Turning his back to audience and reading placard.)* A hundred pounds reward! A hundred pounds! *(Turns towards audience.)* I wonder, now, am I as great a fool as I think I am?

(Curtain.)

T.4. ceases.

Crisis of the 6th Situation: The sergeant approves of his sacrifice.

The curtain falls on a fine touch of character.

PART FOUR

WRITING THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

PART FOUR

WRITING THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

Gathering Material

The man who hopes to be effective in any sort of literary production cannot neglect constant and remote preparation. If his field be the one-act-play, he will be ever on the alert to classify things that happen about him, in their possible relation to a major crisis, as bits of atmosphere, characterization or plot elements.

Following the old Greek Philosopher, his first and most remote preparation will be to "know himself" so that he may never attempt a theme, a setting or a character that is beyond him. If he is young, he will not write on the emptiness of life and love; if he has been respectably reared in a Bronx flat, he will not place his scene in the conservatory of the British Embassy at Rome; if he has lived his life with ordinary people, never really sounding their depths or making researches of an extraordinary nature into the complexities of the human soul, he will not have his heroine a study in psychology. To the man who has trained himself to see where he looks, the elevator man in his apartment house or his own Aunt Kate may be a perfect treasure for a one-act-play; the boarding-house porch in Liberty, New York, where he spends the last three weeks of July, may be a most interesting setting, and the fact that "no man can have his pie and eat it" is theme enough for any number of plots.

With this self-knowledge presupposed, our future playwright is ready to begin his second stage of remote preparation. In reading the daily paper, many little things will strike his fancy as being of some possible future use. Thus, the column, "What do you think?" or "What did you see to-day?" or the section of ads called "Personals" or the "human interest stories" that are sometimes found on the back page, will yield, not plots as a rule, but situations, minor crises, that would serve good purpose in a file. Better still is the habit of trying to account for the striking characters and contrasts seen on trains, ferryboats and street corners; in stores, movie theatres and churches. But happy is the man who, in addition to all this, absorbs a wealth of literature—whether history, biography, legends, novels, poems, books of travel — and reads always with the viewpoint of the dramatist. For, besides enriching all his thoughts on modern life, such a habit opens up to every man the huge fertile field of the past.

To preserve this mass of jottings in a convenient form, Professor Pitkin suggests an interesting box of envelopes labeled as follows:[29]

A) Complication: 1. Comic, 2. Tragic; B) Characters: 3. Men, 4. Women, 5. Children; C) Settings: 6. City, 7. Country, 8. Foreign; D) Dramatic Acts: 9. of violence, 10. of ingenuity; E) Themes: 11. Ideas about human nature, 12. Ideas about the world.

Henry Albert Phillips has this interesting classification of ideas:[30]

"The plot germ of every story is man."

A) *The Heart of Man.* Man's relations with woman.

1) Women. 2) Romance. 3) Children. 4) Family. 5) Separation. 6) Reunion.

B) *The Ambition of Man.* Man's relations with his people.

1) Ambition. 2) Success. 3) Failure. 4) Politics. 5) Patriotism. 6) War. 7) Subjugation. 8) Station.

C) *The Body of Man.* Man's relations with the devil.

1) Money. 2) Disease. 3) Derangement. 4) Crime. 5) Death. 6) Post-Mortem.

D) *The Soul of Man.* Man's relations with God.

1) Religion. 2) Activity.

E) *The Mind of Man.* His interpretation of the unknown.

1) Psychic. 2) Superstition. 3) Suggestion. 4) Charlatanism.

Characterization*

1. Draw up a list of ten men you know.
2. Put down emotional facts about each. This will bring character traits to light.
3. Take a simple situation and imagine in it one man, with one character trait; *e. g.,* Alec Simms, infernally lazy, sits down to breakfast; Ernie Brown, timid, harnesses up a horse.
4. What particular acts will clearly emphasize that trait and be a sure test of a coward, a hypocrite, a dreamer, a hero, or a saint?
5. In one action there are three stages: (a) Immediate response, (b) Reflective delay, (c) Final solution. A character with one trait will act in a special way in each of these stages.

*These exercises are imitations of similar exercises proposed by Professor Pitkin for writers of the short-story.[29]

6. Select two traits that can be in the same person and still may conflict, *e. g.,* ambition — sloth; parsimoniousness — passion for gambling.
7. Select a situation which causes conflict between the two. See the Sergeant in "The Rising of the Moon."

Dialogue

In the following exercises there is to be no plot and no attempt at dialect. Center the attention on being "natural without being mean" and on characterizing.

Exercise I: Monologue.

When handled with skill, this dramatic form can yield very subtle and artistic shades of characterization, ranging from lyrics like Browning's "My Last Duchess," to Ruth Draper's effective and practical work. For beginners, however, the situations chosen should be extremely simple, and the person characterized someone actually known by them, *e. g.*:

I. Reproduce one end of a telephone conversation.

Situation A.
Someone is being asked to a theatre party. That someone may be yourself, your grandmother, your Uncle Charlie who will have his joke, etc. Lead up to a refusal or an acceptance, filling in the character as richly as possible.

Situation B.
Someone is hearing bad news, broken gently.

Situation C.
A mother is trying to persuade a good-for-nothing son to come home for Christmas dinner. Write it up first from one end and then from the other, but not as a dialogue.

II. You are in the front room of a New York tenement. The lady of the house is leaning far out the window, having a sparkling chat with an invisible and inaudible friend two floors below.

III. You are in a ferryboat. Across the aisle sit a man and his wife. In an obvious effort to mollify his wife, the brute is using tones that reach no one's ears but hers. His wife is broadcasting.

EXERCISE II: Dialogue.[29]

Select two characters that offer sufficient contrast. Fix beforehand in your mind, the place where they meet, the time of day, the season of year, the age of the men, their breeding, mentality and dominant characteristics. In other words, try to know them before they open their mouths. Make everything each one says so peculiarly his own, that it will be unnecessary to write the name of the character speaking.

Place your characters, now, in some very simple situation. No plot. No dialect; *e. g.*:

A) One man asks another to settle a debt.

B) Two women discuss new wall paper for the front room.

C) A man tries to explain the stock market to his wife.

D) A boy and girl are trying to talk at a foot-ball game. It is the first time he has ever been, or she has had, an escort.

EXERCISE III: Reconstruction.

Select a standard play. Into the chief character, introduce a new character trait, or change one already there. From that point reconstruct the dialogue; *e. g.*:

A) Suppose that Tom Winwood in "Allison's Lad" has not a spark of courage, but is, entirely, his father's son.

B) Suppose that Lady Simms in "The Twelve-pound Look" is sarcastic.

C) Suppose that Annie in "Ile" is rough and common.

EXERCISE IV: Dialect.

Nothing shows a writer's knowledge of his limitations more clearly than his attempts to use this very difficult instrument. If any one is still obsessed with the idea that to write an Irish comedy he has only to scatter "begorra," "loiks," "furst" and "whisht" all over the page, let him read the natural and peculiar melody of Synge, Pearse or Gregory, and it may teach him caution in the use of all dialects. "Bah Jove!" does not make an Englishman, or "Golly, Boss, Yas Sah!", a negro. If the writer has never lived in the South or known Southerners intimately, it will be very hard for him to depict a convincing Southern Colonel. So with other American types, from Boston, Chicago, New York and in New York, from Broadway, Park Avenue or East River. Never attempt any dialect, without first-hand knowledge, or at least painstaking study of the best models.

Subjoined is a list of colloquialisms collected in one small town by Henry Albert Phillips for use in a novel he was working on. It shows the care a good craftsman will give to this important phase of dialogue.

1. Cuttin' up somethin' scandalous. 2. He turned tail and run. 3. Takin' the victuals right out of a body's mouth. 4. Make yourself to home. 5. You're a fixin' fur a lickin'. 6. She's been ailin' right along. 7. What you want is a good hidin'. 8. He give him a good wallop alongside the head. 9. Oh, they ain't

makin' out any thing to brag of. 10. He's got a spell comin' on now. 11. Let your victuals stop your mouth. 12. Where've you been and gone to? 13. He come by it honestly. 14. He was stiff, stavin' drunk. 15. Ain't seen hide nor hair of him. 16. I'll take none of your slack. 17. There's them that could, if they'd a mind to do it. 18. She's just actin' up, that's all. 19. They treat her worse'n dirt. 20. She's riz up against him. 21. Wait'll she gits her dander up. 22. I won't be beholden to nobody. 23. Will you keep a civil tongue in your head? Etc., etc., etc.

There were a hundred expressions in all, besides a number of individual words like "sparkin', jawin', cowcumbers, hawgs, catawallin', howsomever, etc.," of which only a fraction were actually used in the story. The result was, however, that the fraction rang true and added immeasurably to the impression of literary finish.

Short-Stories Dramatized

Selection: With regard to short-stories that are not available for one-act-plays, read again the chapters on "Singleness of Effect" and "Continuity."

Examination: When a careful selection has been made, the following questions should be answered with regard to the story:

A) What is the author's purpose?
B) What is attractive, what is dramatic in the material?
C) What is the central interest?
D) How is suspense created in the beginning and worked out through the minor to the major crisis?

Scenario: After this examination of the story, a scenario should be sketched. This scenario is not to be a mere summary. On the contrary, it must convey to the reader that for which he would go to the theatre, the emotional treatment of scene after scene.[25]

A) The dramatis personæ must be prefixed, with the age, relationship and condition of each character made clear. Character traits, however, should appear in their actions.

B) The stage setting should be sketched in its essentials.

C) The time and place of the action should be stated.

D) Then the story should be unfolded, scene by scene, with a distinct idea of the emotional value of each. Every exit and entrance should be motivated. Actual dialogue need not but may be introduced from time to time.

From this sort of detailed scenario to a one-act-play is merely an exercise in dialogue.

Plot Work

Before suggesting the "plot-stimulators" outlined below, we need hardly observe that their use does not guarantee a successful issue. We cannot be as encouraging as the following advertisement, which appeared lately in a trade magazine and read: "Let the Universal-Idea Generator keep you at the hot point of creative thinking. It's so easy to make your ideas sprout and grow — build a plot, portray a character, depict a scene." Nothing of the kind. Great plays do not arise automatically from formulæ. In fact, few great playwrights would think of adopting a systematic method. The process, with genius, becomes an unconscious one. Occasionally, a professional has a theme that appeals to him and he seeks a story that will drive it home. But more frequently the creative train is started by some single situation or a character or a bit of atmosphere. By way of

illustrating this point, Lady Gregory tells us in her own simple way how "The Gaol Gate" was conceived.

"I was told a story someone had heard," she writes in "Seven Short Plays," "of a man who had gone to welcome his brother coming out of gaol and heard he had died there before the gates had been opened for him.

"I was going to Galway and at the Gort station I met two cloaked and shawled country women from the slopes of Slieve Echtge, who were obliged to go and see some law official in Galway because of some money left them by a kinsman in Australia. They had never been in a train or to any place farther than a few miles from their own village, but they felt astray and terrified 'like blind beasts in a bog,' they said, and I took care of them through the day.

"An agent was fired at on the road from Athenry and some men were taken up on suspicion. One of them was a young carpenter from my old home and in a little time a rumor was put about that he had informed against the others in the Galway gaol. When the prisoners were taken across the bridge to the court house he was hooted by the crowd, but at the trial it was found he had not informed, that no evidence had been given at all and bonfires were lighted for him as he went home. These three incidents, coming within a few months, wove themselves into this little play."

Finding a Theme.

Lord Dunsany is quoted as saying that he has a play as soon as he has a theme. In that he is exceptional. For most people such a beginning is fraught with peril, betraying them, as it does, into writing an argument or a sermon instead of a play. However, if you must begin with a theme, be sure that it possesses dramatic interest, "with opportunities for logical development along lines of cause and effect and has, at the same time, an impression which spans the whole of the action."

Themes are crowding all around you, in your own heart, in the world that you know and in the books that you read. But nowhere will you find such a

wealth of them more strikingly expressed than in the Bible, especially in books like Wisdom, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

In choosing a theme, remember:

1. That some are so out at the elbow from long service that it will take a master hand to make them look respectable.
2. That some are not moral or true themes. You may write of vice, but it must not be paraded as virtue. This involves the whole principle of morality in art, as well as dramatic truth.
3. That some themes are cul-de-sacs leading to hopeless dilemmas, instead of the solution which the normal audience wants to take home.
4. That some themes are unseasonable for years at a time.

Historical Backgrounds.

The historical one-act-play is most suitable for beginners, because the rich background furnished by costume, setting and the shadows of great figures who, though not present, influence the action, disguises, in a large measure, the amateurish touch in characterization and plot work.

Deep research is not necessary and, in the beginning, hardly desirable. Knoblock set out to write his play on Alexander Hamilton fortified by nothing but an article in the Encyclopedia. After the scenario was written, he read extensively in detailed biographies.

Plot Stimulators.

In every case, whether the first step be theme, character, situation or atmosphere, it must be remembered that drama is "human reaction to a difficulty."

We may now take two principal viewpoints, with regard to that reaction:

A. It will certainly involve passion of some kind, so that our first suggestive list will be of human passions and emotions, together with their subjects and objects.

Passions and Emotions

"By emotion is understood a sudden boiling up of feeling which for a time overwhelms the mind and prevents the free and natural combination of the cognitive elements. Passion, on the other hand, is the movement of feeling, become second nature, deeply rooted by custom. . . . Passion is sharpened and intensified whilst emotion is dulled and enfeebled by reiterated or prolonged stimulation." [31]

Human passions and emotions.

I. Concupiscible:
1) Joy.
2) Sadness.
3) Desire.
4) Abhorrence.
5) Love.
6) Hatred.

II. Irascible:
1) Hope.
2) Despair.
3) Courage.
4) Fear.
5) Anger.

Subjects of passions and emotions.

I. Man. (For subdivisions vid. infr.)

II. Mythical beings with man's weakness.

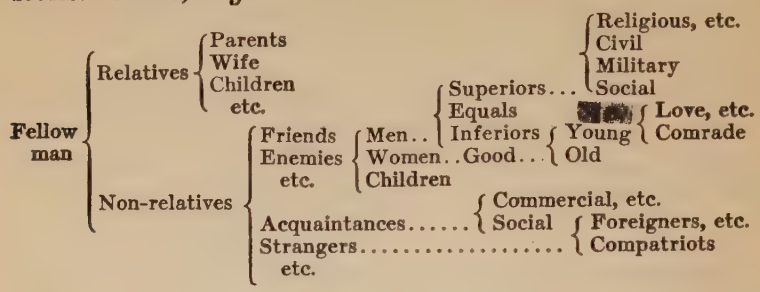
Objects of passions and emotions.

I. God.
II. Self.
III. Fellow man.
IV. The World.
a) Natural.
b) Supernatural.
c) Preternatural.

By changing the object, we arrive at the various species of these fundamental emotions and passions. Thus, Self and the Concupiscibles give us: 1) Joy of possession. 2) Self-pity. 3) Pride, vanity, rivalry.

4) Shame. 5) Self-esteem, self-complacency. 6) Remorse. Fellow man and the same Concupiscibles would give us a hundred others.

The Objects themselves admit of many subdivisions. Thus, *e.g.*:



What combinations of subject, passion and object, would result in: feud, divorce, political aspirations, munificence, patriotism, fanaticism, disease, death, reformation, ghosts and the ludicrous?

Exercise in working with the formula:

"Background + Persons + Passions = Plot."

I. Simple complication plot which offers no conflict of desires.[20] Select an interesting background, for example:

The London fire.
St. Bartholomew's Day.
Salem Witch-burning, etc.

Create one character with one predominant passion. Place him in a simple situation, which is at the same time a difficulty. Turn the imagination loose. Destroy or extricate him by the motive force of the play, that is, his predominant passion. After the plot is worked out, go back and flavor it with the fruits of your reading in History and Biography.

II. Double complication plot — conflict of desires.[29]
Select a background as before.
Create three characters, each with one predominant passion.
E. g.: A hero with courage or credulity.
A heroine with loyalty or suspicion.
A villain with cowardice or greed, etc.
Invent a complication appropriate to the background that will involve all three so that each must use the designated passion. Remember that what is hardest to accomplish in life is the most absorbing in fiction.

III. Given the following central situations, make three plots out of each by changing the character of the subject, and the passion of the subject towards the object.
"1. An old man is turned out after long service.
2. A criminal is married to one who believes him innocent.
3. A poor person imitates one of wealth.
4. One is murdered where he meant to murder another.
5. A person masks his features with a veil.
6. A civilized Indian reverts to type.
7. A servant kills his master.
8. One makes three wishes on a charm.
9. Two failures meet.
10. A person, driven by fear, assumes bravery."[32]

The study of character reactions is especially difficult in transition scenes between crises. Always answer to yourself these questions: Who are they? How

did the situation affect them? What have they been? What will they do?

Make sure of the singleness of impression, carefully excising any situation or remark likely to distract from this impression and heightening any effect likely to intensify it. As a last precaution, satisfy yourself that your climax has been rightly placed.

How can you be sure what the climax is? Know your audience. Know the effect you want to produce. Then your climax will also be the climax of the audience.

B. "Human reaction" will also involve morality of some kind. Every dramatic act either helps us to attain the prime purpose of our existence, or makes its attainment more difficult. Hence, every dramatic act is either good or bad. It is suggestive, then, to have before us a list of virtues and vices, though the use of such a chart is obviously less simple than combining objects and passions.

Virtues and Vices

The virtues are seven: Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance and Justice. Every vice is a cognate virtue gone wrong by defect or excess. In other words, every vice is an exaggeration or an absence of a quality which, taken in a golden mean, would constitute a virtue. Thus, an absence of Hope is Despair; too much Hope is Presumption. An absence of Liberality is Avarice; too much is Extravagance.

Arranged in chart form, the relation between various virtues and vices would suggest many plot-elements to a thoughtful mind. Noting, for example, how closely hardness, stubbornness and even cruelty may shadow an admirable firmness; how near good nature sometimes comes to sloth and vacillation; how often Christ-like meekness is interpreted as weakness; and frugality as the grasping of a miser, we

find less difficulty in making the souls of our characters the true battle-ground of the action. Going a step further, it is stimulating to study the shades of difference which these virtues and vices take on, as they are found now in one temperament, now in another. For convenience, we may use the traditional division of Temperament: Choleric, Phlegmatic, Melancholic, Sanguine and the more recent Nervous Temperament.

Special Scenes for Interest

It is a notorious fact that the American flag, waved vigorously on the stage in a moment of distress, has saved many a bad play from the just vengeance of the audience. In suggesting here the following "sure-fire" scenes, there is no desire to have them used as American flags. The play is not to be first written, then sprinkled with a few of these popular bits and set aside to cool. But where they can be used without the least violation of economy, where they can be made a real part of the crisis, there is some certainty of theatrical effectiveness.

1. Conflict — whether of words or swords.
2. Scolding scenes — especially conjugal.
3. "Nature will out" effects — when a mask falls inadvertently.
4. Eating scenes.
5. Love scenes.
6. Condemnation of one's own fault in another.
7. Malapropism — misuse of words easily recognized.
8. Innocent violation of propriety.
9. Misunderstanding — cross purposes.
10. Verbal portraits — whereby one character impersonates another.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES

Appendix I.

ACCIDENTAL TECHNIQUE.

Accidental technique has been defined in the introduction as that technique which changes with the changing ideals and tastes of different peoples and different generations. This definition will be clarified by a few illustrations which show how intimate is the relation between the technique of the drama and contemporary customs, especially with regard to theatre building.

Greek Drama: Its religious character was responsible for large open-air theatres. The large theatre brought in the mask, the pads, and Cothurnus, thereby making popular tumult, clashes of arms or death on the stage impossible. The large theatre led also to the convention of "Three actors"— strictly observed by Sophocles. There were few who combined a rare poetic feeling, a fine singing voice and a faultless metallic enunciation that could keep thirty thousand persons enthralled for ten hours. Hence, parts were so distributed that three men could play them all.

Elizabethan Drama: The Elizabethan Stage with its great bare apron upon which most of the action transpired, shaped the beginnings and ends of scenes, made countless small scenes possible, and necessitated long scenic descriptions. Concentration was fixed on the lines and the result was at once elaborate and ingenuous.

17th Century Drama: Inigo Jones, the Belasco of the Stuart Court, with his theatre of pretense and extravagance, lowered the quality of drama in England and for a hundred years pageantry was more important there than human nature.

Victorian Drama: Towards the middle of the last century the apron was absorbed and the action retired back of the proscenium arch. Technique, in the fifty years that followed, underwent a change. Asides and soliloquies lost favor. More and more realism was sought. A solid set replaced the old wings and drop. Declamation lost favor and with it long speeches with pauses set for applause.

Modern Drama: Realism had no sooner reached its perfection in Belasco than Gordon Craig and Max Reinhardt began a great reaction. The apron spread once more far into the or-

chestra, the proscenium was discarded and schemes for rapid scene shifting, combined with experiments in interpretative lighting, brought in a decorative drama where art is far removed from nature. Even where the playhouse has remained unchanged, the influences of the movement, joined with the restless gropings of all the modern fine arts, has been responsible for a breakdown in the old technique of plot construction with its ordered acts, developments and climaxes. Ten years ago we had as examples of this new ideal in plot construction, "Milestones," "Romance," "The Good Little Devil," and "The Poor Little Rich Girl"—lately, "Liliom," "The Drifting Shore," "The Emperor Jones," "From Morn to Midnight," "Six Characters in Search of an Author," "The World We Live In," "Beggar on Horseback," "The Potters" and "Outward Bound."

What is ahead of us is suggested by Mr. Macgowan in "The Theatre of To-morrow."

Appendix II.

AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE ONE-ACT-PLAY

Light	Serious
The Satyric Play of Greece.	Short Mystery Plays.
The Mummers' Play of England.	
The Commedia dell'Arte of Italy.	
France imitated this Italian form, but through Molière, the farce became Comedy in one act. (17th Cent.)	Short Miracle Plays.
English reaction to the Commedia dell'Arte is represented by Heywood's "Interludes" and Robert Coxe's "Drolleries."	One-act School Plays, especially in Jesuit Colleges. *

*In the Jesuit "Ratio Studiorum" of 1586, we read: "It is not a little useful that three or four times a year the students of Humanities and Rhetoric should privately stage Eclogues, Scenes and Dialogues written by themselves and staged without scenery." In Vienna, about the time Jamestown was being founded (1609), the Jesuits had a College Theatre with a capacity of three thousand in the main auditorium, and a smaller hall below, for the exercise of class dramatics. This little theatre was needed, for "in the Austrian province, every class yearly was permitted a drama lasting about three quarters of an hour, and with corresponding stage settings. The best students of the other classes were invited to this, but not their teacher." (Duhr, "Geschichte der Jesuiten in den Ländern deutcher Zunge" II, i, 665.)

In the 19th Century, exigencies of the English theatre introduced the curtain-raiser, both light and serious, while on the Continent, French vaudeville made the playlet popular.

Toward the close of the 19th Century, simultaneously in England, France and Germany, the one-act-play appeared as a distinct literary species. Most of the better dramatists of the later nineties tried their hand at it, but it was not until 1911 that the United States could give a serious verdict in the matter. That year we had two importations: one from the Abbey Theatre in Dublin that was disastrous, the other from the Grand Guignol in Paris that was a complete success. Since then the one-act-play has been growing in popularity. If we seek out reasons for its sudden appearance we shall notice three principal factors in its development: 1st. The drama of Ibsen. 2d. The rise of the Free Theatre. 3d. The short-story.

Ibsen

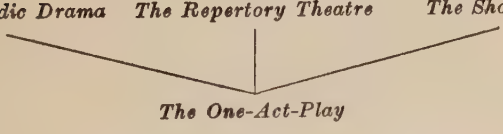
The drama of Ibsen abandoned, some forty years ago, the complicated interweaving of plots popular until that time. In its stead, we find a play wherein the attention is focused on a single situation, the causes or effects of which furnish the entire action. This idea lent itself to a brief and intensely emotional development, preparing the public, meanwhile, for future appreciation of a minute artistic whole.

The Free Theatre

A political censorship in Europe, which could dictate to a management only when money was paid for admission, prepared the way for a Free Theatre where patrons met expenses by subscription. As such patrons were few and select, their theatre was artistic and small. Here, unlike the commercial theatre, a good short play is better than a poor long one. There is in a small theatre an emotional intimacy which is most favorable for a one-act-play.

The Short-Story

By the middle of the 19th Century many of the leading writers in Europe and America, following the lead of Poe and de Maupassant, had sponsored the short-story as a recognized art form. The public was educated in this manner to an appreciation of a "single effect" and a rigid observance of "the unities." There was then no difficulty in transfering this appreciation to the realm of drama.



Appendix III.

CLASSIFICATION OF ONE-ACT-PLAYS.

Difficulty of Classification.

1. *We find many types in a single play.*

Like Polonius, we may have "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral."

2. *We lack Dramatic Epithets.*

"A play like 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,'" writes Dr. James J. Walsh, "is not made a tragedy by ending with a suicide; it is not a comedy because it is too bitter; it is not melodrama because on the whole too realistic in the treatment of the fact; it is not a perfect drama because its personages are mere social types instead of characters; it is not a dramatized novel while its material is essentially suited to a novel, yet it is a successful play without a class tag."

The one-act-play may, notwithstanding, be classified roughly according to the four literary elements:

Emotion, Imagination, Thought and Expression.

1. Emotion.

Comedy: 1. High Comedy ("Beauty and the Jacobin").
2. Comedy of Manners ("The Far-Away Princess").
3. Satire ("Wurzel-Flummery").
4. Farce ("The Wonder Hat").

Tragedy: 1. High Tragedy ("Riders to the Sea").
2. Melodrama ("A Night at An Inn").

It is traditional to classify comedy and tragedy not according to their emotional tone, but merely according to the solution. The one-act-play, however, regards the tone of the piece as of first importance (single effect), the outcome being consistent with the tone. A "Merchant of Venice" whose gloom is dispelled by a belated smile in the fifth act, would be an anomaly in the one-act-play. Again, this is the easier kind of classification. In "Allison's Lad," for instance, the protagonist actually wins in the struggle against his father's blood, but no one would call the play a comedy.

2. Imagination.

Fantasy: "Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil."
Poetic Drama: "The Land of Heart's Desire."

3. Thought.

Thematic: 1. The Play of Ideas —"The Twelve-pound Look."
2. Didactic —"The Beggar and the King."
Emphatic: 1. Character —"Gettysburg."
2. Complication —"A Night at An Inn."
3. Atmosphere —"Riders to the Sea."

A didactic one-act-play offers grounds for dispute. Gregory Zilboorg holds that "when a play starts to teach anything it ceases to be a play." Galsworthy, on the contrary, thinks that "a drama must be shaped so as to have a spire of meaning." [13] It would seem that even a conscious moral would be allowed "if the point of the moral lies in episodes which belong to the main dramatic action and can be grasped in their moral significance by an average audience."

4. Expression.

Realistic: Moderate —"Ile."
Naturalistic —"Goat Alley."
Idealistic: Moderate —"Allison's Lad."
Exaggerated — Not found in good collections.

General Classification:

One and the same play can be classified according to each of the four literary elements in turn. Thus, "Allison's Lad" is 1) Tragedy, 2) Poetic Drama, 3) Emphatic (Character), 4) Moderately Idealistic. Even under one element the play is only predominately under one subdivision. Thus, "Allison's Lad" contains character, complications and atmosphere and has a well-defined theme.

LIST OF ONE-ACT-PLAYS RECOMMENDED FOR STUDY

Baker, Elizabeth: "Miss Tassy." (Sidgewick & Jackson.)
Barrie, Sir James M.: "The Twelve-pound Look."
"Rosalind."
(In "Half-Hours." Charles Scribner's Sons.)
"The Old Lady Shows Her Medals."
(In "The Echoes of the War." Charles Scribner's Sons.)
Beach, Lewis: "The Clod."
(In "Four One-Act-Plays." Brentano.)
Brighouse, Harold: "Lonesome-Like."
(In "The Atlantic Book of Modern Plays." Atlantic Monthly Press.)
Brown, Alice: "Joint Owners in Spain." (W. H. Baker Co.)
Calderon, George: "The Little Stone House."
(In "Eight One-Act-Plays." Sidgewick & Jackson.)
Chapin, Harold: "The Autocrat of the Coffee Stalls." (Gowans & Gray.)
Coppée, François: "The Violin Maker of Cremona."
"Le Pater."
(Dramatic Publishing Co., Chicago.)
Dix, B. M.: "Allison's Lad."
"The Captain of the Gate."
(In "Allison's Lad and Other Plays." Henry Holt & Co.)
Down, Oliphant: "The Maker of Dreams."
(In "One-Act-Plays by Modern Authors." Harcourt, Brace.)
Dowson, Ernest: "The Pierrot of the Minute."
(In "One-Act-Plays by Modern Authors." Harcourt, Brace.)
Drinkwater, John: "The Storm."
"X = O."
(In "Pawns." Houghton, Mifflin Co.)
Dunsany, Lord: "Five Plays." (Little, Brown & Co.)
"Plays of Gods and Men." (Luce & Co.)
Field, R. L.: "Three Pills In a Bottle."
(In "Plays of the Forty-seven Workshop." Brentano.)
Gerstenberg, Alice: "Overtones."
"The Pot Boiler."
(In "Ten One-Act-Plays." Brentano.)
Glaspell, Susan: "Trifles!"
(In "Plays." Small, Maynard & Co.)

Gregory, Lady: "Spreading the News."
"The Workhouse Ward."
"The Rising of the Moon."
"Hyacinth Halvey."
(In "Seven Short Plays." G. P. Putnam's Sons.)

Hervieu, Paul: "Modesty."
(In "Contemporary One-Act-Plays," Lewis. Charles Scribner's Sons.)

Housman, Laurence: "Little Plays of St. Francis." (Small, Maynard & Co.)

Hudson, Holland: "The Shepherd in the Distance." (Stewart & Kidd.)

Lord, Daniel A.: "The Road to Connaught." (Loyola University Press.)

MacKaye, Percy: "Gettysburg."
"Sam Average."
(In "Yankee Fantasies." Duffield & Co.)

Marks, Jeannette: "Three Welsh Plays." (Little, Brown & Co.)

Masefield, John: "The Sweeps of Ninety-Eight."
(In "Two Plays." Macmillan & Co.)

Middleton, George: "Tides." (Henry Holt & Co.)

Millay, Edna St. V.: "Aria di Capo."
(In "Fifty Contemporary One-Act-Plays." Stewart & Kidd.)

Milne, Allan: "Wurzel-Flummery."
(In "One-Act-Plays by Modern Authors." Harcourt, Brace.)
"The Boy Comes Home."
(In "One-Act-Plays of To-day." Small, Maynard & Co.)

O'Neill, Eugene G.: "In the Zone."
"Ile."
"Bound East for Cardiff."
"The Rope."
(Boni & Liveright.)
"The Emperor Jones." (Stewart & Kidd.)

Pearse, Padraic: "The Singer."
"Iosagan."
(In "The Collected Works of Pearse." Frederick A. Stokes Co.)

Rostand, Edmond: "The Romancers," Act I.
(In "One-Act-Plays." Houghton, Mifflin Co.)

Strong, Austin: "The Drums of Oode." (Belasco.)

Suderman, Herman: "The Far-Away Princess."
(In "Contemporary One-Act-Plays." Charles Scribner's Sons.)

Synge, John M.: "Riders to the Sea."
(In "One-Act-Plays by Modern Authors." Harcourt, Brace.)
"The Shadow of the Glen." (Luce & Co.)

Tarkington, Booth: "Beauty and the Jacobin."
(In "One-Act-Plays by Modern Authors." Harcourt, Brace.)

Tchkoff, Anton: "The Swan Song." (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

Torrence, Ridgely: "Granny Maumee."
"The Rider of Dreams."
(In "Three Plays for the Negro Theatre." The Macmillan Co.)
Walker, Stuart: "Nevertheless."
"Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil."
(In "Portmanteau Plays." Stewart & Kidd.)
"The Birthday of the Infanta."
"Sir David Wears a Crown."
(In "Portmanteau Adaptations." Stewart & Kidd.)
Wilde, Percival: "The Noble Lord."
"Confessional"
"The Unseen Host."
"Pawns."
"The Dyspeptic Ogre."
(Little, Brown & Co.)
Yeats, William B.: "The Countess Cathleen."
"The Land of Heart's Desire."
"Cathleen ni Houlihan."
(The Macmillan Co.)

COLLECTIONS OF ONE-ACT-PLAYS

Clark, B. H.: "Representative One-Act-Plays by British and Irish Authors." (Little, Brown & Co.)
Cohen, H. L.: "One-Act-Plays by Modern Authors." (Harcourt, Brace.)
Knickerbocker, Edwin Van B.: "Plays for Classroom Interpretation." (Henry Holt & Co.)
Leonard, S. A.: "The Atlantic Book of Modern Plays." (Atlantic Monthly Press.)
Lewis, B. R.: "Contemporary One-Act-Plays." (Charles Scribner's Sons.)
Marriott, J. W.: "One-Act-Plays of To-day." (Small, Maynard & Co.)
Mayorga, M. G.: "Representative One-Act-Plays by American Authors." (Little, Brown & Co.)
Smith, A. M.: "Short Plays by Representative Authors." (The Macmillan Co.)
Weber and Webster: "One-Act-Plays." (Houghton, Mifflin Co.)

REGIS COLLEGE
S. J.
LIBRARY
DENVER, COLO.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS REFERRED TO IN THE COURSE OF THE TEXT

* 1. R. G. MOULTON . . . . . The Modern Study of Literature
(The University of Chicago Press.)

2. G. FREYTAG . . . . . The Technique of the Drama
(Scott, Foresman & Co.)

3. F. BRUNETIÈRE . . . . . The Law of the Drama
(Dramatic Museum, Columbia University)

4. H. A. JONES . . . . The Renascence of the English Drama
(The Macmillan Co.)

5. G. B. SHAW . . . . . Dramatic Opinions and Essays
(Brentano)

6. W. ARCHER . . . . . Playmaking
(Small, Maynard & Co.)

† 7. BEAUMARCHAIS . . . . . Essay on the Serious Drama

8. D. DIDERO . . . . . On Dramatic Poetry

9. F. SARCEY . . . . . The Theory of the Theatre

10. J. B. MOLIÈRE . . . . . School for Wives Criticized

11. J. DRYDEN . . . . . An Essay on Dramatic Poesie

12. P. WILDE . . . . The Craftsmanship of the One-Act-Play
(Little, Brown & Co.)

13. J. GALSWORTHY . . . Some Platitudes Concerning Drama

14. P. WILDE . . . . . Preface to "The Confessional"
(Little, Brown & Co.)

15. ARISTOTLE . . . . . The Poetics

16. E. WOODBRIDGE . . The Drama. Its Laws and Technique
(Allyn & Bacon.)

17. T. RYMER . . . . . A Short View of Tragedy, etc.

18. P. SYDNEY . . . . . A Defense of Poesie

19. G. E. LESSING . . . . . Hamburg Dramaturgy

20. ABBÉ D'AUBIGNAC . . . . . The Whole Art of the Stage

21. C. HAMILTON . . . . . Studies in Stagecraft
(Henry Holt & Co.)

22. HORACE . . . . . The Art of Poetry

23. S. T. COLERIDGE . . . . . Lectures

24. A. E. PLATT . . . . . Practical Hints in Playwriting

25. G. P. BAKER . . . . . Dramatic Technique
(Houghton, Mifflin Co.)

*The numbers correspond to the small numbers that occur with each quotation in the text.

†Numbers 7, 8, 9, 10, 19, and 20 are translated in "European Theories of the Drama" by Barret H. Clark. (Stewart & Kidd.)

26. K. MACGOWAN . . . . . The Theatre of To-morrow
(Boni & Liveright.)
27. R. W. NEAL . . . . . Short Stories in the Making
(Oxford University Press.)
28. A. DUMAS fils . . . . . Prefaces
29. W. PITKIN . . . . . How to Write Stories
(The Macmillan Co.)
30. H. A. PHILLIPS . . . . . The Plot of the Short Story
(Stanhope-Dodge Pub. Co.)
31. M. MAHER, S.J. . . . . Psychology
(Longmans, Green & Co.)
32. B. C. WILLIAMS . . . . . A Handbook on Story Writing
(Small, Maynard & Co.)
33. J. CONRAD . . . . . The Art of Writing

HIEBERT LIBRARY
3 6877 00132 8110

DATE DUE

NOV 21 '68
MAY 6 '69
MAY 20 '69
FEB 3 '70
MAY 5 '76
MY 20 92
AP15 '93

GAYLORD
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

UPLAND COLLEGE LIBRARY
UPLAND, CALIFORNIA
WITHDRAWN

808.2
G198.2
T

Gannon, Robert Ignatius
The technique of the one-act play.

23064

S0-DUG-371